

[46]

Chapter 3

Political, Administrative, and Judicial
Organization of the Mossi Empire

I. Political and Administrative Organization

643 The Mossi empire of Ouagadougou was governed prior to the period of French occupation by a supreme chief, the Mogho Naba, who was revered by all his subjects as a "god" and whose territory, in the minds of his people, had no limits. He had the power of life and death over all his subjects.

[192] The word mogho means "country of the Mossi," but by extension it also means "the world." Thus, in this sense the Mogho Naba was regarded as the master of the world.

643 It is said that he had under his rule 333 chiefs, naba, among whom were his ministers, the three sogon'kasemsé (great servitors),
● 631 and some forty petty chiefs called kougzindba, which refers to the heaps of stones designating the place of each minister or petty naba in the emperor's court.

643 [177] The authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassals. In spite of the claims made by a colonial official who was trying to free the canton chiefs of one of the administrative districts of the colony from the authority of the Mogho Naba, the emperor's power never was merely nominal. If it has become so, it is a consequence of the intervention of French [47] administrative authority in the politics of the country -- an intervention which has resulted in assigning too much power to certain chiefs.

643 I do not mean to imply that before French penetration into the
669 country there were not real conflicts, wars or mere skirmishes (1),

1. In Chapter 1 [not translated] we described in great detail the war waged by the Mogho Nabas Sanum and Wobgo against Lallé. We said also that Sanum warred with the Boussourma Naba and with Boulsa.

but the chiefs who tried by these means to free themselves from the emperor's authority were usually punished for their temerity.

634 submission was based solely on the fact that although the em-
645 peror named new canton chiefs, he was too remote to know any-
642 thing about the children of deceased naba, so, in order to make
sure during his own lifetime that his eldest son would succeed
him, the kombéré affected some respect toward the emperor's
ministers and made gifts to the principal dignitaries at Ouagadougou.

● 631 Present situation. It is my belief that the present political
649 and administrative reorganization, which dates back about eighteen
years (1912), has taken no account whatsoever of the existing
hierarchy of ministers in the distribution of territorial control. Thus,
it has come about that a given minister has to pass through numer-
ous villages which are under the authority of another minister in
order to reach his own administrative area. In addition, if one
examines the situation closely, it seems that the sole aim of the
administration ["administration" always refers to French adminis-
tration] at that time was to reward certain young and capable
ministers at the expense of those who were too old.

In point of fact, however, one must go back to 1908 to find
the causes of such a state of disorganization. At that time the late
Larrhallé Naba, Pawitraogo, a province chief, was sent off on a
mission to Koudougou, and his vacated office had to be filled.
Later on the emperor dismissed the Kamsogho Naba [51] and re-
placed him with an "incompetent," so the local administration
decided to entrust the province to a more qualified minister.

It would be highly desirable if a new reorganization were put
into effect which would 1) progressively eliminate certain insig-
nificant cantons by combining them into larger units; 2) gather the
so-called independent villages into cantons; and 3) grant to province
chiefs identical material rewards. This last can only be achieved
by an equitable allotment of the cantons. The French administra-
tion has granted equal salaries to all province chiefs and, as a con-
sequence, has established an equality which did not formerly exist.
Three of these officials are now educated men; they enjoy equal
consideration, have the same needs, and alike perform valuable
services. They should all be accorded equal advantages if jealousy
and discontent are to be avoided.

631 Finally, to return to the kombemba, it should be stated that
the vassals of the Mogho Naba at Koudougou and Kaya enjoy a

- 63/ certain amount of independence since they can communicate with the circle commanders with no intermediary other than the interpreter, an indispensable adjunct as long as the chiefs do not attend the [French] schools. On the other hand, the authority of the vassal chiefs still attached to the administrative district of Ouagadougou is, if not entirely lost, at least greatly diminished.

Indeed, their action is thwarted by that of the ministers, the province chiefs, from whom [52] they receive orders, sometimes falsified or amplified by ambitious intermediaries.

It must certainly be conceded that such a state of affairs may have -- it has had -- an unfortunate effect on the progress of these naba. This is an evil which should be remedied without delay.

636
645
565 The local administration at the very beginning made the serious error of failing to take into account the importance of the canton chiefs, most of whom (see the list in the appendix [not translated]) are descendants of the Mogho Naba. On the other hand, virtually all the ministers and other court officials, despite the respect one owes them and the privileges they enjoy, are of humble origin (see Chapter 4 for the origins of the Ouidi Naba and the Larrhallé Naba, for example).

The Petty Kings (Dima) in the Past and Today

643
631 As has been noted in the introductory chapter [not translated], some of the chiefs have gradually freed themselves from the authority of the Mogho Naba and have assumed the title of dima, that is, "king." These chiefs are the Boussouma Naba of the Kaya circle, the Konquizitenga Naba of the Kougoudou circle, the Yako Naba of the Kougoudou circle (Yako subdivision), and the Riziam Naba of the Ouahigouya circle.

These chiefs were, in a sense, independent "rulers," since the emperor's suzerainty over them was so weak [53] that they enjoyed almost complete independence. Some of them, notably the Boussouma Naba and the Yako Naba, have authority over canton chiefs whom they invest in the same way the emperor does.

- 643 These dima maintain courts which with some exceptions, are like
● 631 that of the emperor of the Mossi.

They were appointed directly by their own ministers; the emperor took no effective role in the proceedings.

Today. The local administration has made these petty kings into simple province chiefs and sometimes -- as happened to the Konquizitenga Naba -- into mere canton chiefs.

Respect due the Mogho Naba. Each year the petty dima sent numerous gifts to the Mogho Naba (horses, cattle, and cowries).

643 An error. The Tenkodogo Naba (1), contrary [54] to what

643
634 1. It should not be assumed that the Tenkodogo Naba controls all the cantons in the administrative district of Tenkodogo.

Several Boussancé [Busansi] cantons were ruled by the Mogho Naba before the French occupation. Out of the 14 cantons which now make up the province called Boussanga, 11 were under the emperor's jurisdiction and their chiefs were appointed by him. Like all vassal chiefs, they were required to visit the emperor once a year and to bring him annual tribute.

Since Tenkodogo has been changed first to a subdivision and then to an autonomous circle, the Boussancé chiefs involved have been appointed directly by the local administration with the consent of the population; the Mogho Naba was no longer consulted. After trouble arose over the appointment of a canton chief, the Mogho Naba had to intervene, and from this affair arose the necessity of putting a relative of the emperor at the head of those cantons organized

643
634

as provinces. The choice fell upon a uterine brother of Naba Kom, Moustapha Kongo.

He was recalled in 1930 after ruling for only three years. His dismissal was certainly due to errors committed in the performance of his duties, but it was also caused by the fact that the Boussancé had been independent too long to take kindly to a master.

Thus, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the local administration has interfered too much with the organization of the Mossi empire. The position of the Mogho Naba has been completely distorted, and his prestige diminished. This is why the ill-informed official to whom we have already alluded could state that the authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassal chiefs was merely nominal.

A list of Boussancé cantons under the authority of the Mogho Naba follows: (1) Niaogo, (2) Niarba, (3) Lenga, (4) Gon Boussougou, (5) Komtoéga, (6) Beguedo, (7) Ouanragou, (8) Sanogo, (9) Toalla, (10) Zourga, (11) Yakala.

643 has been accepted up to now, is a true king in his territory and as such is absolutely independent of the Mogho Naba at Ouagadougou, to the same degree as the head of the state of Yatenga (Ouahigouya) and the head of Fada N'Gourma.

As was pointed out in an earlier chapter [not translated], the Tenkodogo Naba is the descendant of Naba Zoungana, the son of Ouedraogo, and is consequently the "elder" of the Mogho Naba, who is a descendant of Naba Oubri, the founder of the Mossi dynasty of Ouagadougou.

631 The Boulsa Naba, a direct descendant of the kourita [representative after death] of [55] Naba Oubri, is not a dima but merely
635 a kombéré. He has a vassal, to be sure, the chief of Koupéla in the circle of Tenkodogo who is now considered a province chief, but the Boulsa Naba himself is a vassal of the Mogho Naba.

576 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object
643 to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

573 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion,
576 they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers
602 of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the oroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's
576 ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms
352 furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are
177 offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of
576 note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs
352 even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

Hierarchies among the Ministers and Officials
at the Court of the King of the Mossi

554
631 There exists a kind of hierarchy among the naba. One chief may have to uncover his head before greeting another because he is his "little brother" (yaoua) or because he is in the presence of a chief of higher rank (for instance, the "petty kings," dima).

It is extremely difficult to determine the hierarchy which exists among the kombemba because there are so many of them, but they respect it even today. It would be difficult to undertake research on the subject which has only local interest and would not benefit our work.

645
554
576 The following paragraphs, therefore, will deal only with the ministers and other officials at the emperor's court.

Mutual relations among the ministers before the French occupation. (a) The Ouidi-Naba, prime minister and chief of the cavalry. [113] After his appointment the Ouidi Naba is required only to call on the Mogho Naba. The other ministers and the notables at Ouagadougou must call on him. Naturally, by virtue of his rank, the Ouidi Naba is expected to offer them large quantities of beer and to have sheep and even cows slaughtered in their honor.

(b) The Larrhallé Naba, a minister also and guardian of the tombs. Despite what happened quite recently (March-April, 1929), the Larrhallé Naba is only required to call on the Ouidi Naba and, if he wishes to do so, on the Gounga Naba. He does not call upon the other ministers and officials.

(c) The Gounga Naba is required to call upon the two higher ministers, the Ouidi Naba and Larrhallé Naba. The other officials at court must call on him, and, like the Ouidi Naba, he offers them beer and meat.

(d) The Baloum Naba, the steward of the Mogho Naba and chief of the pages. Early in his term of office he must call upon the three principal ministers and upon the imam. No other visits are required of him, he does not call upon other court personages.

This stated, let us go on to the most important matter.

The Kombéré: Death, Enthronement

631 Death. Upon the death of a kombéré two representatives in
 763 mourning are sent from the canton to Ouagadougou to deliver the
 202 sad news to the Mogho Naba. The envoys are entrusted with a
 horse or a sheep, depending on the importance of the naba. Tanga
 branches are tied to the animal's tail (see Ouidi Naba, Chapter 4).

[136] When the first emissary reaches the courtyard of the
 Mogho Naba, he sits down, taking care to place one hand on the
 ground and stretching out his arm. Since the very sight of the horse
 is significant, even before any explanation is offered, the Zusoaba
 enters the house of the Mogho Naba and comes out again bearing a
 gourd of water with flour in it (zom kom) which he pours on the
 envoy's arm.

The horse is then handed over to a representative of the Ouidi
 Naba who removes the branches and leads the animal to Within
 [Ouidin].

The Zusoaba takes back the gourd, and it is only then that the
 Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "Naba zagl yka sambga le
 tongalamé (Chief So-and-So has been stricken with such-and-such
 an illness and has succumbed)." It should be added that before going
 to see the Mogho Naba, the envoys first inform the ministers of the
 death of the kombéré.

631 The Mogho Naba asks a few appropriate questions and sends
 766 the representatives to prepare the kouré. On the day of the cere-
 mony, the Nabitienga (eldest son of the deceased chief) has large
 quantities of beer and saghbo prepared and sheep and cattle killed to
 feed the people gathered in great numbers for the occasion.

The house is circled, as was described for the Mogho Naba.

[145] (a) Koupéogo (kouré basket). The koupéogo is a basket, artisti-
 cally made, into which is put the foutou (clothing of the deceased),
 [137] koursi (trousers), his pougla (red fez), his néoda (slippers),
 the zandé (club), and the wed'zouré (horse's tail). This basket is
 laid upon a pé'gaongo (skin of a sheep) in the zaongo (antechamber).

One of the sisters of the Nabitienga, usually the eldest daugh-
 ter of the deceased, carries the péogo outside and seats herself at the
 place where the dead chief held his daily audiences (guéré). The
benda, liumsé, and gangando drums are played together, and then

631 everyone gives what he can. Everyone from the Nabitienga down
 766 through his brothers and sisters, close relatives, and their brothers
 and sisters, in short, anyone even remotely related to the de-
 ceased, comes up and offers something. Most often the gift is made
 up of cowries.

The koupego is then returned to the zaongo. Some zom kom
 (water with flour in it) and some darn (dolo or fermented millet
 beer) are poured at the door of the antechamber.

The benda and other drummers gather up all the cowries they
 have received and go a short distance from the house to divide them
 up.

The benda are expected to give a few cowries to any Yarga,
 Silmimoaga, or sayan (1) who happens to pass by during the dis-

1. Yarga: a Dioula [Diula] of the
 Mandé [Mande] group. Silmimoaga:
 one who has adopted the customs of
 the Peulh.

tribution.

Sayan: blacksmith.

(b) Fado. This is the share that goes by right to the Mogho
 Naba from the estate of every kombéré.

[138] The Mogho Naba sends representatives to whom are en-
 trusted a rooster, a sheep, and, depending on the importance of the
 chief, a cow and 5,000 to 10,000 cowries.

As soon as he has been presented to the Nabitienga, the first
 envoy of the Mogho Naba says to him: "Nab'kayé ti mog'naba yel
tid wa pous' nabitiengh'togo lad reguib' lokon'wa tib laguemb taba
ti ya yel koudgo (Such-and-such a chief having died, the Mogho
 Naba sends us to deliver his condolences to the Nabitienga and to
 request of him that the quiver of the naba be turned over to us so
 that it may be placed beside those of his ancestors, as is the cus-
 tom)."

The Nabitienga thanks them and orders the loko [quiver] to be
 brought out at once. It is placed on the ground, and sacrifice is
 made, in turn, of the chicken, the sheep, and even the cow sent
 by the Mogho Naba.

63
643
428
766 All of these preliminaries are only the beginning, and when they are completed, the emperor's first envoy orders the Nabitienga to go out into the sunshine so that the fado [share for the Mogho Naba] may be claimed. The Nabitienga complies with the request. Thereupon the first envoy says to him through a messenger: "Mogh' Naba yé tid wa reg fado, ya nig'tousri (1,000 head of cattle), pissi tousri (1,000 sheep), bouss'tousri (1,000 goats), foutou tousri (1,000 garments)," etc. To which the Nabitienga replies: "Tond ba sin ki a ka bas roumsi ne arzek'yé (our late father left neither animals nor other wealth sufficient to satisfy the demands of the Mogho Naba)."

The messenger reports the reply to the emperor's representatives. The relatives of the Nabitienga go [139] to gather together a wanka (hoe), a laré (ax), and a goégo (sickle), and then they tell the nayiridamba (representatives) to go into the antechamber where all of the wealth is piled up. The nayirdamba [sic] send in some oroné who come back and report on what is there. Then they ask the Nabitienga for the fado a second time, and this time it is given to them in the form of the following articles: a robe, a pair of trousers, bracelets, fodo, rouamba (ornaments of the napagha), an ample robe, a pair of slippers, a knife (zangoégo), some salt, some cowries, kalgo (soumbala) balls, nemdo (dried meat), moui (rice), etc.

The envoys are housed for a whole week by the Nabitienga, aided by the inhabitants and his relatives.

On the eighth day, before taking leave of his guests, the Nabitienga slaughters a cow, has large quantities of saghbo and beer prepared and sheep killed, gives clothing to all the envoys of the Mogho Naba, offers them up to 50,000 cowries, depending on their importance, etc.

He has a horse saddled with his father's saddle, and the animal is tethered in front of the antechamber.

One of the nayirdamba unties the horse and walks three times around the house of the deceased naba. The person who mounts the horse is given liguidi (cowries) and clothing and the fez of the naba. He is entitled to keep all this after his return to Ouagadougou, after he has reported to the authorities. The horse becomes the property of the Mogho Naba and is turned over to the Wedranga Naba (personal equerry of the king).

63/ 43/ The Nabitienga notifies the populace of the [140] canton that in view of his father's death he wishes to go to Ouagadougou to lay claim to the succession. He then asks the aid of every man present: 100 cowries from each ykanda (head of compound) and 50 cowries from each dakonré (bachelor). This aid is at once forthcoming unless there is rivalry for the post. In that case the villages give their help to the candidate they wish to have appointed.

When he reaches Ouagadougou, the Nabitienga makes a series of calls and presents numerous gifts.

He gives: 1) 10,000 cowries and a sheep to the minister of the Mogho Naba who has jurisdiction over him; 2) 50,000 to 100,000 cowries, depending on his importance, a horse, and sometimes a cow to the Mogho Naba himself; 3) varying quantities of cowries, depending on the importance of the person visited, to the other ministers and important personages; 4) 1,000 to 2,000 cowries and a rooster to the Zusoaba (chief eunuch) whom he visits the following morning; and finally 5) generous gifts during the rest of his stay to the bonsramba (griot), benda, luinsé, doudissi, and gangando, as well as other courtiers.

63/ Nomination. A kombéré candidate may stay at Ouagadougou from twenty to thirty days or even longer. On the eve of the nomination, the Mogho Naba summons the Baloum Naba and orders him to have the Baloum Naba and orders him to have the Nabitienga provide a chicken and a sheep for his sacrifice. This is certain proof that he is going to be appointed the next day, so he very generously rewards the sononé who brings him the message.

[141] The sheep (pesgo) and the rooster (noraogo) are sent to the Mogho Naba, who has them killed in his courtyard.

The next day the Mogho Naba, as soon as he appears, summons the Ouidi Naba, the Larrhallé Naba, the Kamsoro Naba, the Gounga Naba, and the Baloum Naba, and says to them: "Today I wish to make an end of the koubissi ("children of the kouré" or funeral observances); which among the candidates here is really capable of succeeding the late chief?" The Ouidi Naba replies: "Do whatever pleases you, Sire." After this, the Mogho Naba says: "In that case, I designate the Nabitienga, for his father did not forget me an instant during his life and it would not make sense to pass over his son." Then the Mogho Naba returns to his palace.

The Ouidi Naba returns to his place, calls the Baloum Naba, the Bend Naba, and the Poé Naba, and tells them the sovereign's

631 decision. These three personages thank the Ouidi Naba, and the Baloum Naba in turn goes back to his place, summons the Sogoné-kassanga (chief of the sogoné), and orders him to send for a reliable sogoné. The latter, accompanied by a Bilbalga (inhabitant of Bilbalogo, the section of the Baloum Naba), is sent to answer the call of the Ouidi Naba.

The Ouidi Naba says to them: "Yelé Nakomsé, Nabaoudba tib leb saonrin (tell the naba candidates to come out into the sun), Laf soki Nabitienga diessé à ba sin nan ki a yela mé ti niondi kon and nam (and ask the Nabitienga which son or relative his father, before he died, designated to succeed him)." The Nabitienga replies: "Yamb yam m'ba ka niak ned [142] yé (act as you see fit; my father designated no one)."

Once more the Ouidi Naba sends a question: "Là ting ramb yé la me tib kon anda (which candidate was chosen by the inhabitants of the canton)?" The Nabitienga replies again: "Ting ramb ka niak ned tib kon yé (the inhabitants have no choice but yours)." When this reply is brought to the Ouidi Naba, he finally says: "Go now and invest the Nabitienga with full powers; he is the choice of the Mogho Naba (Toughin kon nabitieng nam, ti Mog'Naba yella me tib kon nien)." Then the envoys snatch the sheepskin which the Nabitienga was wearing over his shoulder and turn in one corner of it. They bear him in triumph to the tom-boko (literally, "hole in the dust"), and the appointed naba is now acclaimed by the crowd. He is then taken successively before the Ouidi Naba, the Zusoaba, and the Baloum Naba. Finally he is led to the shelter in which stands the Bend' Naba (chief of all the drummers of the Mogho Naba), who salutes him to the sound of his drum.

[551] The Zabyouré (literally, "pseudonym"). This is the name adopted by each new chief. It replaces his real name which must not be uttered during the lifetime of the naba.

As he stands before the Band'Naba, the Nabitienga says: "Everyone has honored me, respected me, and the Mogho Naba has chosen me to succeed my father. I have no zabyouré, and I cannot, after all, get along without one." He then begins to enumerate some possible ones (for a study of these names, see [143] the special section above). Once all of these formalities are completed, the

631 new naba mounts his horse and goes off with the minister who has jurisdiction over him. The minister offers him some zom kom (water with flour in it) and then welcomes him into his courtyard where he is offered a canari of dam (beer) and gouré (kola nuts). He is then escorted back to the home of his gangsoba by a goodly throng of drummers, horsemen, etc.

631 All the defeated candidates are required to shave their heads
302 at once and to make a formal act of submission to the new naba as soon as he has returned to the home of his gangsoba (host). It should be added that the candidates allow their hair to grow from the day of the death of the naba to the day on which his successor is appointed.

631 The new appointee must offer dam, saghbo, and cowries to the
431 nayiridamba. He also offers dam, kola nuts, and cowries to the drummers.

631 On the following day he accompanies the minister to the home
644 of the Mogho Naba. During the monarch's second audience (beg sonré), the minister calls him to salute the Mogho Naba. The new naba goes forward to the tomboko, cries out three times (cries of joy), and then performs the kantissé (the Mossi salute). Thereupon, the Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "The chief whom you deigned to honor yesterday wishes to express his gratitude." The Mogho Naba responds to the salute and then, for the first time, offers him a canari of dam.

The new naba then calls upon the ministers and other important personages (Ouidi Naba, Larhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, [144] Poé Naba, Kamsoro Naba, Samandé Naba, the imam, Daporé Naba, and the next day the Zusoaba).

Seven days later the Mogho Naba gives him a robe, a pougla (red fez), a nagpouré (cushion), and néoda (slippers).

The new naba removes his old ragged clothes (I use the description advisedly, since custom forbids him to change his clothes until he has received those given by the Mogho Naba). He gives the discarded garments to a relative, dresses in the robe from the Mogho Naba, puts on the pougla (fez), and becomes a true naba.

631 A few days later he asks permission to return to his own lands. Many court representatives (nayiridamba) accompany him. It is the

- 631 duty of these representatives to assemble the notables of the vil-
lages and to order them to submit to the new naba, the only one
recognized by the Mogho Naba.

631 In order to show their joy,³ the people have large quantities of
527 beer prepared, and games are organized which may continue for
several days. The village notables come to offer their submission
and to swear fealty, bringing gifts (cowries, sheep, etc.) in ac-
cordance with the resources of the village and the wealth of the
inhabitants.

631 When the nayirdamba leave for Ougadougou, the naba gives:
431 a wife and a robe to the Bilbalga; a wife and a robe to the soroné
of the Mogho Naba; a wife and a robe to the soroné or the
Baloum-Naba; a wife and a robe to the child of the Bend'Naba; etc.

Any children born to the women [145] so given belong, re-
spectively, to the masters of these representatives.

631 Burial. Their burial is carried out in much the same manner
766 as in the case of the Mogho Naba, except for the specific persons
involved. The arrangement of the tomb is also similar, although
there is, of course, less pomp displayed. [146]

3 [i.e. At the appointment of the new naba - Analyst]

Chapter 9

The Two Major Mossi Festivals

Mossi Festivals

796 In actual fact, there is only one annual festival celebrated by
527 the Mossi. It is known as tinsé or tingana. A second festival,
which is more a family affair, is called basgha. The latter is
variously named, depending on the region: for the Mogho Naba,
it is called m'barengma; for the ordinary Moaga, basgha; in
certain regions, kinkirga; etc. Although the date for the first
festival is fixed by the Mogho Naba, the second festival is cele-
brated by each canton chief, each village chief, or each ikanda
(married man) on any day that suits him, usually after the harvest.

In addition to these principal festivals, every important vil-
lage has its annual festival, a kind of special market day. On

643 of his successor. He presides over the election and proclaims the new-
645 ly elected chief. The Laralé is the guardian of the Moro Naba's ancestral tombs, and the Ballum is the head of the pages and dancers. When the Moro Naba gives one of his pages in marriage, the latter settles near the huts of the Ballum Naba. This is the least important minister; prior to the French occupation, he was given no province to rule.

631 The Moro Naba ruled directly over a large part of the Mossi territories. The part under his immediate jurisdiction was apportioned among his four principal ministers, who each had under him the heads of the cantons. Those territories not directly subject to the Moro Naba were placed under the authority of powerful chiefs who might be called province chiefs, assuredly vassals of the Moro Naba, but very independent vassals, somewhat similar to the dukes of Brittany and Burgundy vis-à-vis the King of France. Such are the nabas of Ouahigouya, Yako, Boussouma, Béloussa, etc.; there are many of them outside the territory reserved to the Moro Naba, especially to the north, east, and south. These province chiefs could also have independent vassals who, nevertheless, acknowledged their authority, such as the naba of Koupéla, a true province chief, but a vassal of the naba of Béloussa, in turn a vassal of the Moro Naba. The naba of Salmatenga stands in the same position with reference to the naba of Boussouma.

Each province is divided into cantons, each headed by a naba, and the canton includes several villages, each of which usually has its naba. Some of the villages are directly controlled by the province chief who apportions them among his ministers. Some villages may not even have a true naba. These are usually villages established by the children of an important naba. In this case an old man is entrusted with the administrative functions. These villages without a naba may nevertheless obtain one. For example, if the province chief has a son who settles in the community and the inhabitants are pleased with his presence, his father may name him naba of the
[562] village. A very few villages are ruled by women who are assisted by the elders when a case is to be judged.

The power of each chief is tempered by his council. The Moro Naba himself does not act without consulting his ministers. Each province /17/ chief has a council. The titles of the ministers vary from one province to another, but their functions are the same.

631 The canton chiefs consult the oldest men in the village where they reside, and the village chiefs make no decisions bearing on the community without assembling the elders and listening to their advice.

Everything is carried out through the channels of the hierarchy. A province chief never transmits an order directly to a village ruled by a canton chief, but he advises the latter who notifies the village chief, and the village chief in turn calls the elders together, conveys the orders to them, and through them informs all his subjects. The orders passed down in this formal way are always carried out, but if perchance a canton chief should wish to disobey his province chief, he would be seconded by his people who recognize his authority before any other.

643 The last Moro Nabas had become to some extent idle kings. The
645 protocol to which they were subjected by custom constantly encumbered
701 them, not unlike European court etiquette. The Moro Naba was surrounded with a veritable court. As mentioned above, his High Council was composed of five chief ministers. To these should be added the Iman who represents the Moslems and who wields a certain influence, and the Teng'Soba. /Tr. Among the Mossi there is both a Teng'Soba, earth priest, and a Tan'Soba, war minister. It would seem that the latter is meant here. / The duties of the latter are quite specialized. He does not live in the same village as the Moro Naba, and he rules a canton. In case of war, he is consulted on the timeliness of the hostilities and on their chances of success. It devolves upon him at this time to make the proper sacrifices and to question the ancestral spirits. When war has been decided on, he takes command of the armies, and everyone, the ministers and the canton chiefs, must obey him. The Moro Naba remains in Ouagadougou.

644 A crowd of subalterns gravitate around these high dignitaries. The
839 eunuchs are not very respectable people; sometimes habitual thieves were made eunuchs, as were, in general, those pages guilty of too much familiarity with the naba's wives. Some of them could reach a high position. The Kamisoro were always eunuchs, and several important cantons were set aside for them.

644 The pages are young boys, hand-picked from the country's most gifted children. They must serve the naba, and they bear the name soroné. The naba is never alone; he always has one or several pages by his side. One holds the fan, one stands near the monarch to help him shift his position, another takes care of his shoes, yet another of his scepter; the great cup-bearer constantly holds a gourd filled with strong millet beer and covered by a tray of artistically woven basketry.

644 with its tall copper stirrups, bears on either side a larger copper tray.
[442] The drums are played when the naba leaves his dwelling, shift to a different tune when he places his foot in the stirrup, and shift once more when he sets out on his way. The whole population over a radius of several kilometers is thus apprised of the Moro Naba's every gesture. A page precedes him bearing his pillow, and another carrying his scepter. The ministers present at the court and the foreign chiefs present at the capital hasten to mount their horses. Several of the Moro Naba's bodyguards accompany him: 'four strapping fellows walk by his side, their arms leaning against the horse's rump as though to prevent the monarch from falling, while horsemen armed with spears do a fantasia, running 100 meters ahead of the naba, brandishing their spears, returning at full gallop, and setting off again. This constant coming and going entertains the naba who does not gallop.

631 /19/ Every province and canton chief has his court, his ministers,
644 his pages, his drummers. Eunuchs, however, are solely the prerogative of the Moro Naba. In order to qualify for pages, pillow, and spurs, a chief must be invested properly. The present naba of Koupéla who failed to follow the traditions possesses none of these privileges.

The investiture of nabas follows a complex tradition. Each naba invests his own vassals in office. The Moro Naba invests the province chiefs, except for those who hold the title *dimma*; the province chiefs invest the canton chiefs, and the latter invest the chiefs of villages within their jurisdiction. The right of nomination is an important source of revenue for the nabas.

622 Upon the death of a village chief, several candidates vie for power.

431 They all go to the naba who rules over them, to greet him and to offer him numerous gifts, cowries, chickens, sheep, and, if they are sufficiently wealthy, salt bars, a horse, sometimes even a wife. The one who gives the most has the best chance of being chosen, and the naba decides to announce his choice only when he feels that the candidates are running out of gifts.

622 In Koupéla, a village chief under the direct jurisdiction of the province chief is nominated in the following way. The candidates must apply to the minister who has control over their village. He is the indispensable intermediary between them and the naba who is to make the choice, he is their guide, their *sor'soba*. When the nomination draws near, the minister goes at night to see the naba, and together they agree on the choice to be made. They may appoint

635 wear spurs and to have pages and a pillow. When the festivities are over at Kourit'Yaorin, the naba enters Koupéla where he is to reside.

643 When the Moro Naba died, the country fell prey to revolution and
664 to the servants of the deceased, who looted everything they could.

This is why the death of the Moro Naba was carefully concealed until the day of the funeral; this is why, once it had been announced, no one dared go out without a bow and arrows or at least a spear. Women and children stayed home. In order to prevent any disorder, a new
643 election was called as soon as possible. The Widi Naba acted as intermediary and gathered the votes of the electors. The latter numbered twenty-five: the five high ministers and twenty other chiefs, of no great importance in everyday life, who were not canton chiefs and were often mere family heads, but who were high electors by right inherited from father to son since the founding of the Ouagadougou dynasty. These twenty-five electors consulted the people of their entourage and told the Widi Naba which candidate had received their vote. There could be several candidates, but to be elected one had to be a member of the family /22/ of Naba Oubri, the founder of the dynasty. Once the funeral ceremonies were over, the Widi Naba rounded up all the canton chiefs and all the nabas present in Ouagadougou, and proclaimed the name of the man chosen, to whom he presented the badges of office. Numerous ceremonies followed, the most solemn of which took place in a small village called Paspanga, two kilometers from Ouagadougou. All the nabas went there in turn, beginning with the defeated candidates, to render their oath of loyalty.

All these customs were followed for the investiture of the present Moro Naba, Naba Kom.

Chapter 3. Rights of Chiefs and Rights of Private Individuals

631 The nabas, whether heads of villages, cantons, or provinces, were all-powerful, and no one could act without their knowledge or own anything beyond what they permitted him to possess.

In theory, Mossi country belongs entirely to the Moro Naba, who may dispose of everything as he wishes and give land to anyone he pleases. In practice, the Moro Naba delegates some of his

631 powers to his vassals, the province chiefs, who in turn entrust them to the canton chiefs, and these do likewise with the village chiefs. Thus, when a native wants to move from one canton to another, or even from one village to another, he must be authorized to do so. 166 He must request the permission of the canton or village chief to settle 425 in such-and-such a place, and the chief of the village where he wants to live tells him where he may build his huts and which field he may cultivate. The naba may dispossess one of his subjects, if he so wishes, and give his field to another. After all, he "has the strength." This rarely happens, however, and a native who has cleared a piece of bush, fertilized a plot to sow maize, sowed and weeded the ground, is usually assured of a harvest, except in case of war. If a man is evicted, on the other hand, there is no appeal; neither the canton chief nor the province chief would listen to him; they would do the same thing if the opportunity arose.

421 There is no communal property. Every individual works his fields for his own account; he himself collects the fruit of his labor and remains its undisputed master. Nevertheless, every native owes his 651 chiefs and benefactors a tithe; and at harvest time it is interesting 431 to watch everyone sorting ears of maize, braiding sorghum stems, and measuring out baskets of small millet. The village chief is to get so many ears of maize; the canton chief, if he does not reside too far away, so many others; the father- or fathers-in-law will get theirs, and so will one friend or another to whom one owes cowries, or who has previously granted a favor. However, everyone who deals out goods right and left will in turn get some from various other people and approximately regain his expenditure. The village chiefs offer more sizable gifts to the canton chiefs, and the latter do likewise to the province chiefs.

651 These were, in fact, taxes, not fixed taxes per capita, but completely arbitrary ones. If the naba found a gift insufficient, he had 661 no compunction about saying so, and the person involved had to comply. It is said that the naba of Koupéla paid annually 500,000 cowries (500 francs) and /23/ three horses to the naba of Béloua, and a million cowries (1000 francs) in two installments to the Moro Naba, to whom he also gave five horses. The gifts to the Moro Naba were brought first to the naba of Béloua and from there conveyed to Ouagadougou: ever the hierarchy.

This quasi-official tax, however, was not the only one. Whenever the Moro Naba wanted horses, cattle, or anything whatever, he

173

have founded the Fada-N'Gourma dynasty; and Rawa, his eldest brother (in Mossi, "Rawa" means the courageous, the strong), is supposed to have founded the Rawatenga dynasty which has since become the Yatenga. As for the Ouagadougou dynasty, it was indeed Oubri, son of Zoungourana, who is said to have founded it. On this last point, all the traditions are in agreement, the one on which Captain Lambert bases his theories, as well as those of Moulins and Vadier.

[631]

most powerful. The relations between the naba of Ouagadougou and those of Tenkodogo and Gourma, their cousins, were always those of a sovereign to his vassal (5).

5. It is unlikely that this situation prevailed from the beginning, since the higher authority should have been that of the Tenkodogo naba. But when the Mossi kingdom of Ouagadougou subsequently became the more powerful, it established its primacy over the neighboring, less powerful kingdoms of Tenkodogo and Fada-N'Gourma.

"Their common ancestor, Zunghrama, died in Komtoéga, where his grave is still shown."

174

In conclusion, Captain Lambert states:

1. That the Mossi come from south of Bornu, an area still inhabited by a people, the Mossah, who greatly resemble them. /9/
2. That the Mossi went through Haoussa and Djerma in order to come to Dagomba.
3. That the Mossi of today come from those of Dagomba.

He also states, but we can ignore this claim as being absolutely contrary to the facts known to us today, that the journey from Djerma to Dagomba was made during or after the sixteenth century A. D. and was occasioned by the crusades that the second Songhai empire

tion and, when he arrived at the sparsely settled Ninisi village of Nobéré, 173 he decided to stay and make it his home. The Ninisi ran away when they saw Biligo coming, but he persuaded them to return and live in peace under his command. The Tengsoba, or earth priest, of the village refused to return, and Biligo went into the bush and captured him so that the sacrifices to the earth shrines could continue as before. Biligo married a local woman and, when she bore him sons, he sent them to rule those villages not inhabited by the earth priests. These sons and their families formed the noble classes in the district.

About one hundred years ago a district chief called Peka supported the loser in a fight for the supreme chieftainship and was killed when the victorious pretender was installed as chief in Ouagadougou. The victor 173 sent his son, Ngado, to rule over Nobéré and, although the relatives of Peka were scattered, the village chiefs were allowed to retain their posts. 565 These chiefs did lose their noble status, however, because Ngado's sons 631 who went to live in the villages formed the new nobility. The chiefs and their families were submerged into the commoner class. The history of Nobéré is typical of that of most of the Mossi districts and, today, one finds the remnants of many former ruling lineages scattered around the country.

The supreme ruler of the Mossi was called the Moro-naba. He possessed the nam which is the symbol of power, and because of this power he had 643 the right of life and death over all his subjects. He also had a religious rôle in the country because it was his duty to initiate the yearly rites dedicated to the ancestors so that the country would have good crops, and so that the people would be happy and multiply. The Moro-naba was aided in his rule over the Mossi by five ministers who were responsible for the 645 five provinces grouping 333 villages that made up the territory of the state. These ministers were responsible for the proper administration of the state, and they nominally elected the new Moro-naba.

As soon as the death of the ruler was announced, civil disorder broke out throughout the country and continued until the five ministers and the minister for war took fictive control of the country. When the funeral of the late chief was completed the chief minister, the Ouidi-naba, summoned the lesser ministers to a conference and told them that the country had no chief "because the fire had gone out" and that it now required one. He advised them to consider the qualifications of the late chief's son and of all the other pretenders, and to choose the most worthy individual. The lesser ministers refused to do this, saying: "You are our superior, and the right to make the choice rests on you alone."

The eldest son of the former ruler was usually elected Moro-naba but, as any member of the royal lineage up to the third degree was eligible, many persons tried to bribe the elector. When the Ouidi-naba made his choice he told the minister of war: "My mind is not at ease because I fear that those whose hopes have not been fulfilled will resort to violence."

obligations to the Moro-naba, his lands were raided, his women seized and, if he were caught, he was killed.

It is difficult to ascertain how the institution of provincial administrators arose among the Mossi. Some of the people still believe that the ministers were formerly slaves of the Moro-naba, but Delobsom claims that the first ministers were warrior companions of Naba Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty.⁴ These men were not members of the royal lineage and thus were inferior in status to the members of the royal lineage and sublineages under their supervision. However, as emissaries of the Moro-naba, these ministers were entitled to respect by all the people. The ministers recommended successors to vacant district chieftainships; thus it was incumbent upon a district chief to be friendly with his minister if he wished succession to go to his eldest son.

The minister was the person who carried orders from the Moro-naba to the district chiefs, and he reported back to the Moro-naba on conditions in the district he visited. However, the minister could not interfere in the internal affairs of a district, nor could the district chief complain to the Moro-naba about a minister. Everyone was required to observe the strict hierarchy; the only sanction that the district chief exercised over his minister was to appeal to another minister in the hope that the Moro-naba would come to his aid.

The districts that comprised the provinces of the ministers were scattered around the country and were not equal in size or importance. One minister, the Baloum-naba, controlled the districts ruled over by those chiefs who were the sons of recent rulers. Another, the Kamsoro-naba, a eunuch, had control of the largest and wealthiest districts, but he, in contrast to the other ministers, was not succeeded by sons and, when he died, the Moro-naba inherited all of his property. The ministers frequently became very wealthy because they received gifts whenever their charges went to Ouagadougou to pay homage to the ruler. The people from the districts under their control provided labor for their fields and for the upkeep of their houses. The ministers also received bribes from persons seeking vacant district chieftainships.

When a district chief or Kombéré died, his heirs sent a horse or a sheep with leaves on its tail to notify the ruler of the death. The Moro-naba always questioned the envoys, and when he was satisfied that his man had not met with foul play, he sent the animal to his chief minister. The Moro-naba then sent his own envoys to the late chief's house with offerings for sacrifices to their common ancestors, and also instructed the envoys to collect the death offerings from the chief's relatives. After the funeral the eldest son of the dead chief and the other pretenders went to Ouagadougou bearing gifts to the district minister and the other important men surrounding the ruler. When the time came to name the new district chief, the Moro-naba called his ministers together and asked them: "Which one of the candidates is really capable of succeeding the late chief?"

635 The Ouidi-naba answered: "Naba, you may do as you desire." The ruler then said, "Under these conditions I will designate the eldest son of the late chief as the new Kombéré because his father has never forgotten me, or gave me any trouble when he was alive. It will not be good to reject his son." The ministers then called the heir and put the following question to him three times: "Before his death, did your father designate anyone to replace him as chief?" The heir replied three times: "No! My father did not designate anyone. You may name anyone you wish; even if he is a blind man or a leper." The heir was then given a bonnet, the symbol of the nam, and made to swear on drinking the Tibo, a ritual potion, that if he ever betrayed the ruler, may the Tibo kill him. Thereafter, all the members of the new chief's lineage swore to respect and obey him.

635 The power and function of the Kombéré were similar to those of the Moro-naba, but on a much reduced scale. As the person who had received the nam from the Moro-naba, he was supreme in his district, subject only to his obligation to the head ruler. These obligations included the customary gifts and aid in warfare. There is some evidence that many of the Kombérés were lax in paying this tribute and rendering homage to the Moro-naba and consequently were punished or killed. Naba Warga fought a five-year-long civil war against a rebellious vassal before the rebel was killed, and Naba Wobogo was engaged in a three-year civil war with one of his vassals when the French arrived in the country. It is not clear whether the Moro-naba was able to prevent or stop war between his vassals over strayed cattle or stolen women. The Mossi in the district of Nobéré said that the Moro-naba did not often know when neighboring villages were at war. These wars did not involve the loss of territories by the districts, since it was ritually forbidden for one district chief to take lands from another.

631 The district chiefs had ministers who helped them administer the districts. These ministers were descendants of the sons of the Moro-naba's ministers who accompanied the first district chief when he took up his fief. They had control of several villages and they channeled goods and services from the villages to the district heads. The hierarchy of command was also strictly observed on this level, and a village chief who had disputes with other village chiefs, or who had important cases to be judged, was required always to be accompanied by his minister when he visited the district chief. This official could put any man into stocks for serious crimes, but he could authorize the death only of commoners. It must be pointed out, however, that in many cases the district chief usurped the rights of the Moro-naba, and had a troublesome noble secretly strangled. The district chief, like the Moro-naba, could not be deposed; he was often forced to commit suicide or met death by foul play or in open civil war. The people in the district reacted to an unjust ruler by leaving his territories.

The village chiefs held their fiefs directly from the district chiefs, and

THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

747

The village chiefs had their fiefs directly from the district chiefs, and were enfeoffed through the principle of primogeniture on the advice of district chiefs' ministers. They paid homage, and owed fealty, to their district chiefs, although part of their tribute always was sent to the Moronaba. In the event of war they followed their district chief when he went to serve the Moronaba. The village chiefs received presents from the heads of the families in the village and settled any local court cases in their villages. They did not have the right, however, either to put men into stocks or to have them executed. They were aided in the administration of the villages by the heads of families.

Almost every Mossi village had sections in which the nobles lived. As stated above, these people were the relatives or descendants of the district heads, and they lived in a semiparasitic condition upon the commoners in the village. Most of them owned horses and, in addition to furnishing the cavalry for the district chief's contingent during war, they raided and attacked caravans passing through the country. The nobles were subject to the control of the village chiefs, and it was not unusual for them to be under the jurisdiction of chiefs who were members of the commoner class. In such cases the district chiefs had a great deal of difficulty resolving the problems between their vassals and their kinsmen. The nobles could steal the wives and daughters of the commoners, but if a commoner tried to steal the wife of a noble he and the woman were both killed. Whenever a noble threatened to disrupt the life of a district he was secretly strangled by the district chief's men.

The above is a brief account of the origin and structure of the Mossi political system. Most of the myths regarding the origin of this system seem to suggest that here is a classic conquest state, but one neither founded by Caucasians nor extraordinarily influenced by them. The Mossi state is homogeneous in race, language, and culture, a feature not found in most of the other Sudanic states. This fact is not interesting in itself until we note that the Mossi share many cultural traits with the Voltaic peoples. Marc believes that this cultural homogeneity is the result of the Mossi invasion of the area during which they imposed their languages and customs on the indigenous populations. Apparently not believing the traditions about the Dagomba origin of the Mossi, he explains the fact that such non-Mossi groups as the Nankana, Wala, and Dagari speak Mossi dialects as proof that the Mossi were politically more powerful in ancient times, but "the feudal regime disappeared little by little.... The Mossi language was kept; [it is] the only actual witness of the ancient power of the Mossi" (author's translation).⁵ We know, however, that the Mossi were still encroaching on the territories of their neighbors when the French arrived in 1896.⁶

Rattray believes that the inhabitants of Mamprussi, Dagomba, and Mossi territories are the same now as they were "centuries before the ancestors of those who are now their rulers appeared on the scene."⁷ He states that

631
622565
631631
692
174
114

631 these conquerors even adopted the language and culture of the indigenous
 642 populations, but introduced an "administrative machinery" that welded
 174 scattered local groups into loose confederacies without affecting in any
 114 great degree the inner life of these groups.⁸ Rattray's hypothesis appears
 to explain quite adequately the reasons for the cultural homogeneity of the
 Mossi and the other Voltaic peoples. It also conforms to what we know
 from recent historical times of the organizing and conquering abilities of
 such figures as Samory and El Hadj Omar. These men carved out veritable
 empires in this area in remarkably short periods. However, we need not
 accept Rattray's hypothesis that foreigners were the ones who instituted
 "administrative machinery" among the Mossi. It is highly possible that
 the Mossi state might have been the result of internal Voltaic develop-
 ment when one Dagomba lineage established its hegemony over scattered
 local people in this area. There is some evidence here that the Mossi
 state had many of the features of the widespread Negro pattern of political
 structure so common to the other Sudanic states, and this fits in very well
 with what Professor Greenberg reports about the basic African nature of
 these states.⁹

631 It is clear that the Mossi state was a complex entity and many persons
 642 cannot describe it without calling it feudal.¹⁰ However, the question of
 121 feudalism itself is a vexing one, and many scholars limit the use of this
 171 term to describe the political system of medieval France and possibly
 Japan. In fact, not many people would admit the presence of feudal states
 in Africa although some, such as S. F. Nadel, who worked among the
 Nupe, call the Sudanic states feudal and talk about fiefs and vassalage.
 It is now generally agreed that feudalism, despite its other aspects, is
 basically a form of government. Stephenson gives the classic features of
 a feudal state as: (1) fief-holding with vassalage; (2) homage and fealty;
 (3) mutual obligations between lords and vassals; (4) military service from
 the vassals; (5) inheritance of fiefs by heirs of vassals, usually by primo-
 geniture; (6) subinfeudation; (7) attendance at court; and (8) wardship and
 marriage arrangements by which fiefs could be held in trust for minors and,
 in the case of female heirs, husbands who can render homage for them.¹¹

An examination of the Mossi political system in terms of the first six
 characteristics of feudalism shows that this system conforms very well
 to the specifications for a feudal system. The Mossi did not have an
 elaborate court structure on the European model and, since only mature
 males could inherit fiefs, no arrangements for wardships and marriages
 were necessary. Furthermore, I do not think that these two traits are
 necessary for feudalism, and they can be considered as cultural content
 that need not be present in all social processes with similar functions.

Mossi-like societies present a special problem to political theorists
 because of the importance of kinship in their political systems. Coulborn¹²
 strongly insists that "A feudal society... is based on contract. It is not

based on kinship." He contrasts the Gesellschaft feudal system with the tribal Gemeinschaft, and recognizes the possible transition from Gemeinschaft relationships to Gesellschaft relationships in the evolution of culture. However, this admission places Coulborn on the horns of a dilemma as he does not accept feudalism as a step in the evolution of the state, but as a form of government that develops after the breakdown of a state and is used for state restoration. He states that "The place of feudalism in the rise of civilized societies is not yet complete, but we must pause to notice the profound importance of the substitution of something different for kinship relations."¹³ We see from the Mossi data that they used kin bonds instead of warrior-band bonds as the basis for delimiting the persons chosen for government. The warrior-band members were rewarded with hereditary administrative positions. It must be emphasized, however, that despite kinship bonds, it was the loyalty of a man that determined whether his heirs received his fief.... These new vassals were required to renew pledges of allegiance to a ruler sometimes very remotely related. It must be borne in mind that kinship does play a part in political systems that range from feudalism to twentieth century Western democracy.

We cannot fail to observe that it was in regard to the society of the Chou period in China, one similar to that of the Mossi, that Coulborn was compelled to withhold judgment as to the nature of its political system. Shang society seemed to have had many of the tribal characteristics of the people found in the pre-Mossi Voltaic area. Chou had to face the problems of ancestor veneration associated with the tribal lands, and used some of the same techniques as the Mossi. Coulborn found many of these features "foreign to a tribal society" and finally decided to "leave open the decision as to whether Chou China developed a feudal system or a system of city states as its first enduring polity."¹⁴

In conclusion I shall say that the political system of the Mossi had definite feudal characteristics. These feudal characteristics did not come as a result of the breakdown of a pre-existing state, but served as techniques for building a state from small scattered groups. I should certainly like to keep open the whole question of feudalism, especially as it applies to the question of the origin of the pristine state, until more comparative data from Africa can shed additional light on this important subject.

References

1. GREENBERG, J. 1949. The Negro kingdoms of the Sudan. Trans. N.Y. Acad. Sci. Ser. II 11(4): 130.
2. MARC, L. 1909. Le pays Mossi. : 137-139. Paris, France.
3. DELOESOM, A. 1932. L'Empire du Mogho-Naba. : 131. Paris, France.
4. DELOESOM, A. 1932. L'Empire du Mogho-Naba. : 63. Paris, France.
5. MARC, L. 1909. Le pays Mossi. : 140. Paris, France.
6. TAUXIER, L. 1912. Le Noir du Soudan. : 583. Paris, France.
7. RATTRAY, R. S. 1932. Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland. 2 vols. : 549. Oxford Univ. Press. Oxford, England.

631
642
121
171

113

Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation

composed of two major groups of communities," Fortes goes on to describe this pattern succinctly: 171

On the one side are those that claim to be descendants of immigrants from parts of the country other than their present habitats. On the other side are communities that claim to be the autochthonous inhabitants. . . . Many of the immigrant communities claim descent from forbears of the Mampuru ruling stock. Though now wholly amalgamated with the alleged aboriginal inhabitants, they have certain ritual observances and a system of chieftainship similar to those of the Mamprusi. . . . The institution distinctive of the autochthonous communities is the office of "Custodian of the Earth." This ritual office, involving priestly functions in connection with the cult of the Earth, is found among many West African peoples from the Senegal to the mouth of the Niger. In the Voltaic region it is the exclusive prerogative of the autochthonous communities.² [793]

The inhabitants of the Yatenga at the time of the arrival of the Mossi were the Kurumankobe, or Fulse, as they are called by the Mossi. Their descendants recognize their indigenous origin but have become almost wholly acculturated to the Mossi. While most Mossi bear the sib name Wedraogo and maintain political control in the Yatenga, the descendants of the Kurumankobe usually have the sib name Savadogo and are excluded from the exercise of political authority. They have retained the custodianship of the earth, and the elders of their lineages and sibs are the Mossi's *Tenga Soba namba*, their "earth custodians," charged with propitiating the supernatural forces of nature. 173 563 614 [793]

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The present king of the Yatenga, the *Yatenga Naba*, is a lineal descendant of the first ruler, Naba Yadiga. The members of the lineage of the king are called "those who maintain themselves upon us" (*riim namba*). Directly subordinate to the authority of the *Yatenga Naba* are his four grand ministers, each of whom has authority over a particular province (*solum*) of the Yatenga.³ 631 [644] [635]

The province over which each of the grand ministers presides as lord is divided up into a number of cantons (*tense*), each of which is ruled by a chief who is the central political authority both of the village in which he resides and of the villages within the canton. Like the province, the concept of the canton is not precisely territorial. Some villages may owe 631 634

² Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 6.

³ These provinces refer not only to geographical areas of the kingdom but to particular categories of the population. For example, the *Balum Naba* has direct authority over the southern regions of the Yatenga and indirect authority over the cantons of Riziām and Zittenga, political entities which have never fully recognized the central authority of the *Yatenga Naba*. This same minister is also especially charged with maintaining liaison with certain of the more important earth custodians throughout the Yatenga.

Continuity and Change in African Cultures

631 their allegiance directly to the *Yatenga Naba* for historical reasons or
 634 because their chiefs are related to the royal lineage and superior within
 the social hierarchy to the local nobility (*nakomse*) to which the canton
 chiefs belong.

631 Subordinate, in turn, to the canton chief, is the village chief (*Tenga*
Naba), who is the central authority in the aggregation of "quarters"
 622 (*sakse*) of which a Mossi village is composed. These quarters are the
 dwellings of patrilineal extended families and lineages (*boodoose*). Such
 592 a residence is called a *saka* if it contains the house of the lineage elder
 (*sak kasama*) or a *yiri* if it represents only a junior segment. In either
 case the dwelling of the oldest male in the group is surrounded by the
 separate houses of his wives, his younger brothers and their wives, and
 his sons, nephews, cousins, and their wives and children. Each adult
 individual has a separate house within the *saka*.

The smallest unit within the residence of the lineage is the nuclear
 515 family (*zaka*) composed of a man, his wife, and their children. If a man
 has more than one wife, the term *zaka pedere* (*zaka* half) may be used
 when the man's relationship with one of his several wives is being con-
 sidered. He himself is called *zaka soba*. As a young man's family grows,
 each of his new wives is provided with a house adjoining his. In addition
 to his house and the houses of his wives, each man's household contains
 several granaries used to store the produce from the millet fields he has
 been assigned by his lineage. It is with the members of his own household
 that a man is in most frequent social and economic interaction. The
 fields he works with their assistance are the principal source of the food
 supply for the nuclear family unit.

596 The *yiri* is the next largest social unit within the *saka*. The term
 refers to the extended family dwelling inhabited by a man, his wives,
 his male children, and their wives and children. It may be composed of
 as many as fifteen separate nuclear families. While its inhabitants usually
 consist of the married sons of an older man and their nuclear families,
 it may also be composed of a man, his wife and children, and his younger
 brothers and their wives and children. Since its members are closely
 related within the lineage, there is greater social and economic inter-
 action among them than there is with the other lineage members. As
 the *zaka soba* is the principal and final authority within the *zaka*, the
yiri soba is most important within the *yiri*.

[592] Composed of the nuclear and extended family dwellings of its mem-
 bers, the Mossi residential unit is typically inhabited by all of the local
 representatives of the sib. In addition to the dwelling of the lineage elder,
 it contains the altar (*kiemserogo*) where the ancestral spirits of the lineage
 are worshiped. The lineage elder has authority over everyone living
 within his *saka*. As counselor to the village chief and intermediary with

175 at La and waged a series of battles in the Yako region. Naba Koutou, twenty-eighth successor of Oubry, fought in the Sourgou region (Kipirsi). And finally, during the last few years preceding our occupation, Naba Sanom and Bokary Koutou attacked the village of Lallé.

643
631 According to Moulins' data, it was Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, who set three of his sons as heads of the Boussouma, Béloussa and Yako provinces. He made them veritable monarchs who were united to the Moro Naba by a mere bond of vassalage, as was already the case with the chief of Tenkodogo.

Moulins adds, "As a rule, the chiefs of vassal provinces do not seem to have given much thought to enfranchisement from the Moro Naba's suzerainty, which actually did not weigh heavily upon them. We must come all the way to modern times, to Sanom's reign, to find signs of a struggle between the sovereign and the chiefs of Boussouma and Béloussa.

"On the other hand, the important vassals sometimes resorted to the Moro Naba's support to strengthen their authority within their own provinces. We have just mentioned the expeditions directed against Yako. Tradition has also preserved the memory of a series of battles waged by Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, against the Boussansé of Garango who attempted to free themselves from Tenkodogo Naba."

174 Following this brief glance at the history of the Mossi empire, there remain, or should remain, three questions to investigate.

1. The remote origins of the Mossi proper, the conquering Mossi who came from Dagomba to Tenkodogo and then to Ouagadougou. At the present day, however, these origins are unknown. They might be uncovered by studying the Mossi language and comparing it systematically with the ancient or present tongues of north, east, and west Africa. I do not believe that such a piece of research is forthcoming, however. /464/ The Mossi might also be studied from the standpoint of physical anthropology, in which case two distinct studies ought to be made, one of the chiefs and nobles, another of the bulk of the Mossi population. The results would then be compared with those obtained for other populations of north and west Africa. Like the one previously mentioned, however, this would be a tremendous project which is not likely to be undertaken in the near future.

567
326 Dagomba conquest. Both family type and slave status, indeed, refer back to the Bobo, Gourounsi, etc.

000 We come now to public powers. We refer the reader to Appendix 32 /not translated/ for a study of property regulations and neighborhood relations, and plunge forthwith into the study of public powers.

● 631 We already know that the Mossi political organization is centralized. The villages belong to cantons, which are in turn gathered into provinces under direct administration or into mere vassal provinces. At the summit of the hierarchy stands the king, the Moro Naba, the supreme chief of the Mossi, who lives at Ouagadougou. To give an idea of the former importance, or at least relative importance, of this empire, we shall state that in the Ouagadougou circle alone there were eight provinces including among them 300 cantons, 5,000 villages or small towns, and 861,700 inhabitants.

[162]
643 Let us begin our description of this political organism with the head, that is, with the Moro Naba.

Moro Naba means "chief of the Mossi," from naba, "chief" and Moro or Mora which means Mossi in the singular. Moro yields Mossi or Mossé in the plural. (The French have grown accustomed to saying "one Mossi, several Mossi," but this is a barbarism and one should /568/ actually say, "one Moro, several Mossi," just as one says, "one Gourounga, several Gourounsi," "one Kipirga, several Kipirsi," etc.). As for the word for "chief," it is both naba and soba in Mossi. Naba seems to be the word brought by the conquering Mossi-Dagomba group, while soba is probably the word that was used by the autochthonous population to designate chiefs.

[192]
645 Prior to the French conquest, the Moro Naba was surrounded by a certain number of ministers or eminent dignitaries who were given 1) specific duties /at court/, 2) in addition, part of the territory to govern. This is what accounted for provinces over and above the cantons, at least in those areas that were administered directly, but the heads of those provinces did not reside there. They lived at Ouagadougou, and were first and foremost ministers of the Moro Naba.

They were:

643 of the electoral college was not accepted by the populace and dis-
 669 turbances occurred in spite of the proclamation of the king-elect.
 This was when Naba Sagha, the son of Naba Kom, was chosen.
 The people would have liked to see Kaoko, son of Naba Zombéré,
 nominated. Dissatisfied because the sovereign of their choice had
 not reached the throne, they would not acknowledge the man chosen
 by the college. The new monarch managed to take over the throne
 only after waging a bloody battle at the head of his followers against
 his unlucky rival.

645 The province chiefs who are ministers are nominated by the
 635 Moro Naba, who selects the man most deserving of the succession
 among the closest relatives of the chief to be replaced. Province
 chiefs enjoy considerable power in the administration of their
 provinces, they are surrounded with a large court, but they stand
 under the direct control of the Moro Naba.

635 It must be added that aside from the five provinces lying under
 the direct rule of the Moro Naba of Ouagadougou, there were four
 others (Boussouma and Béloussa to the northeast, Yako to the north-
 west, Tenkodogo to the southeast) that were mere vassal provinces
 and that actually enjoyed nearly complete autonomy prior to our
 occupation. Tenkodogo province was especially important.

The chiefs of these /latter/ provinces were true monarchs
 selected in the same fashion as the Moro Naba by the electoral col-
 lege of their province. Once elected, they enjoyed all the prerog-
 atives of sovereignty, nominating the canton chiefs and adminis-
 tering their provinces as they saw fit.

• [631] Their power was as absolute in their own sphere as that of the
 Moro Naba over the whole of his subject provinces, but they ac-
 knowledged his sovereignty and offered him a gift as a token of
 their vassalage at the time when their powers were handed over to
 them.

634 /576/ Within the subject provinces, the canton chiefs were
 621 nominated by the Moro Naba on the basis of an introduction by the
 province chief. They were always selected among the closest rela-
 tives of the chief they were to replace, always descendants of
 Oubry, the first Moro Naba. They stood under the direct orders of
 the province chief, whom they had to use as an intermediary to
 communicate with the Moro Naba. It was their task to proceed with

634 the nomination of the village chiefs, who were always selected
621 from the family of the preceding chief.

Let us add that in principle, and all other things being equal,
1428 it was the eldest son of the deceased chief who was supposed to suc-
631 ceed his father, and this applied to village chiefs as well as to
canton chiefs, province chiefs, and the Moro Naba. This principle
ran counter to the true patriarchal principle where the younger brother
is always the natural and legitimate heir of the deceased brother.
The requirements of a warlike existence had probably forced it upon
the Mossi at the time of their conquest of the Dagomba and Mossi
territories.

This principle of direct inheritance (rather than collateral in-
heritance) had been restricted, however, by the powers of higher
authorities represented by canton chiefs vis-à-vis village chiefs,
province chiefs vis-à-vis canton chiefs, the Moro Naba vis-à-vis
the province chiefs, and the electoral college of the high digni-
taries vis-à-vis the future Moro Naba. In short, the warriors' prin-
ciple of inheritance from father to eldest son ruled among the Mossi
in the power sphere, but had to give way to the exigencies of gov-
ernment whenever necessary.

631 Let us not believe that the third principle, namely the consent
of the people involved, was altogether unknown among the Mossi
(the consent of the village inhabitants in the case of a village chief,
of the canton notables in the case of a canton chief, of the province
notables in the case of a province chief, etc.) This third principle,
however, was the least important, the least taken into account, the
least actualized from a mere potential. /577/ Whenever it clashed
with the others, it had to give way.

Let us add that the majority of Mossi chiefs were aided by rep-
resentatives called baloum.

635
634
624 "The province chiefs," says the Monographie, "the majority of
canton chiefs, and even the chiefs of a few important villages, are
aided by one or several baloum or palace masters, whom they choose
freely. These are sometimes former captives, but most frequently
they are common natives or former soroné, and they are never
nakomsé. Their function is not hereditary. It grants them the right
to substitute for the naba, to speak and act in his name."

687
631 Moulin adds, "Custom does not anticipate the possibility of a chief being, properly speaking, stripped of his rule. A naba who gives the sovereign reasons for complaint is summoned under a pretext of some sort and put to death without further ceremony at the close of the audience granted to him. If the chief, guessing at the true purpose of the Moro Naba's invitation, demurs at going, a column is sent into the region over which he rules with the mission of seizing him and taking him to the Moro Naba, who has him put to death by his pages."

622 Let us add that in the Mossi /language/ a village chief is called tengasoba or tenganaba, from tenga, "earth, place, spot" and by extension "village," and from naba or soba, "chief." There are also chiefs of quarters called sakanaba, sakasoba, or sakakasaman, from saka, "quarter," and naba, soba, or kasaman, "chief." Mossi villages are indeed divided into quarters located some 200, 300, 400, or 500 meters apart and consisting of several soukala which usually stand, as we know, 40 or 50 meters apart. When the head of a quarter dies, it is the oldest soukala chief in the quarter who replaces him.

565 Below the Moro Naba and the chiefs of provinces, cantons, and villages, there existed among the Mossi a true aristocracy, a genuine nobility, the nakomsé, or sons of chiefs. "They were granted," says Moulin, "important privileges. They had the right to loot passing caravans and to demand from the common natives gifts of cowries, livestock, grain, etc., which the latter could not deny them. They were forbidden to kill, but if they committed murder, instead of being put to death, they were merely put in irons for a short period of time. Furthermore, they were granted the privilege of being tried only by the Moro Naba, head of their house, for all their crimes and misdemeanors." They are all descended, or supposed to be descended, from Moro Naba Oubry, conqueror of Mossi territory.

565
171 The existence of this aristocracy among the Mossi must be carefully noted, for it distinguishes them sharply from the populations we have studied up to now, Bobo, Nounouma, Kassouna, Sissala, Dagari, etc. Nobles are not found often among the Blacks of West Africa, and they are found only among groups that are, or formerly

PATTERNS OF SUCCESSION TO POLITICAL OFFICE

during a period of transition to effective independence. 008

The Mossi have the unique distinction of having preserved their ethnic identity and political autonomy throughout all the vicissitudes of Sudanese history until conquered by the French on September 1, 1896. The origin of Mossi society is couched in mythological terms. According to their tradition they came from Dagomba in the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) sometime during the 11th or 12th century and moved northward towards the Niger River. During this migration they carved out three large kingdoms and many small principalities by conquering and absorbing some of the indigenous Ninisi and Foulse and Dogon populations, and by chasing the others into the cliffs of Bandiagara. In 1328, according to Es Sadi in the *Tarikb es Soudan*, the Mossi attacked, burned, and sacked Timbuktu, then held by Mali, and during the following century attacked Walata and Banku. They received their first setback by the Ali, and were severely beaten by Askia the Great, the usurper of the Songhoi throne, who lead a *jihad* against them in 1499. But their attacks into the Niger bend did not cease until the Moroccans became masters of Timbuktu sometime in the early 1590's. From that period until the French conquest, the Mossi remained relatively quiescent. They developed and maintained 105 an economy based on grain cultivation, livestock rearing, cotton pro- 631 duction, and trade between the forest zones and the desert. Their political system crystallized into a loose confederacy of fairly autonomous kingdoms and principalities, sometimes tribute to the Moro Naba, the ruler of Wagadougou.

Wagadougou, the most important Mossi political entity, was like 631 the lesser kingdoms, pyramidal in political structure. At the top was 643 and still is the Moro Naba, a lineal descendant of Wedraogo, the Dagomba conquerer who founded the Mossi group and Moro Naba Wubri, the first ruler of the Wagadougou dynasty. Paying allegiance 635 to him, were the princes who ruled such autonomous provinces as Yako, Boulsa, Mane, Riziam, and Boussouma. These princes were all sons or near relatives of the early Moro Nabas. Directly under the Moro 634 Naba were district chiefs who were descended from the cadet branches of the ruling family: The villages within the district were in turn ruled 632 by the chiefs of the indigenous populations. In many of the villages, 636

JOURNAL OF HUMAN RELATIONS

631
643
565 the sons of the ruling family, the *nakomces*, formed a noble class, above classes of commoners, serfs, and slaves. Classed among the commoners in many villages were the descendants of former district chiefs who had been deposed by the Moro Nabas. The reason that the rulers gave for the deposal of district chiefs was always disloyalty; but everyone recognized that this was an excuse whereby the reigning sublineage deposed older branches and provided positions for its cadet or collateral branches.

631 The governing hierarchy of the Mossi was a lineage with its com-
613 ponent minor and minimal branches. Like most lineages, this ruling lineage possessed an ideology that all of its members had equal access to its corporate assets. The most important asset of this lineage was, of course, its sovereignty, its right to rule. The *nam* is the symbol of Mossi sovereignty and is described by them as "that force of God which enables a mere man to rule over other men." The *nam* was the possession of Wedraogo, the group's founder, and of Moro Naba Wubri, the first ruler of Wagadougou, and this possession became the patrimony of all their descendants. This being the case, the ruling chief of any village, district, principality, or kingdom did not own the *nam* of that area; he was considered the temporary holder of it, and on his death it reverted to the collective descendants of the royal ancestors.

[428] A man did not have the right to pass the *nam* on to any person because
424 it was not his. Whenever a Mossi chief was being considered for office his commoner electors asked him the following questions: "Before his death, did Naba X designate anyone to replace him as chief?" This question was asked three times, and the candidate responded three times: "No! The Naba did not designate anyone. You may name anyone you wish; even if he is a blind man or a leper."

In actuality, this vaunted equality of access to the *nam* by all members of the ruling lineage was a legal fiction. And despite the fact that all the nobles declared that they could go to Wagadougou to seek the *nam* whenever a chief died, in reality only the members of the dead chief's minimal lineage (often the descendants of his grandfather) presented themselves as candidates. Indeed, of all the candidates, the eldest son of the dead ruler was the one most often chosen to be

PATTERNS OF SUCCESSION TO POLITICAL OFFICE

chief. If he was not qualified then one of his younger brothers, or ⁶³¹ one of father's brothers or uncles was chosen. Yet, the fiction of ⁶¹³ equal access to the *nam* was important to the Mossi because it enabled them to adhere to their most important political axiom which was that "The only man who should rule is one who can keep the country." Regencies were avoided, and persons with physical and character defects were barred. Moreover, this flexibility gave the electors a wide choice of candidates from which to choose the person best fitted for chieftainship at any given period. The Mossi have always believed that it is difficult to rule men and this is what they mean when they declare: "Nanamsè toumdè ya yida fa fa"—"The work of the chiefs is the most difficult of all."³ For example, it does not seem like an accident that the first ruler, Moro Naba Wubri, was succeeded by four of his brothers in turn instead of by his sons. The Mossi had not completely conquered the territory, and the young sons were incapable of handling the complex political situation. The graves of each of the successors to Wubri in different parts of the country remain as markers to testify to the difficult task which the early rulers had in controlling their realm.

The Mossi believed, and still do believe, that it was only when con- ⁶¹² flict developed after a ruler died, that the people realized how necessary and valuable a chief was. The death of a chief, especially of the Moro ⁷⁶⁴ Naba, was kept a secret until the war minister arrived at the capital with his troops. Only then did the cry go up: "The fire has gone out!"; and as soon as it was heard, violence broke out throughout the ⁶⁶⁹ land. Prisoners were released, thieves rifled the markets, and the *nakomces*, or nobles, rode about the countryside doing whatever they wished. This custom persisted as late as 1942. Reporting to his superior in Abijan about the events that transpired in Wagadougou when Moro Naba Kom died, the French commander wrote: "On Friday, March 13, 1942, young people, profiting from old custom, tried to steal things, but they were stopped and about one hundred were arrested."⁴ Throughout all the chaos which attended the death of a ⁶⁴⁵ king, the war minister remained calm unless an attempt was actually ⁶⁹⁶ made to seize power. He never attempted to stop the public disorder or to catch thieves or murderers, because everyone believed that out of

11: Skinner

FA28 Mossi FA28

● 631

/For information on Mossi "kingdoms" see category 642./

SOVEREIGNTY, KINSHIP, COMMUNITY

642¹⁴
613
173 had done so with full permission of his father and in place of an unadven-
778 turous elder brother.

635 For example, the ruling family of the Boulsa province claimed that its
642 ancestor, Naba Namende, was the eldest son of Mogho Naba Oubri and
613 chose to become his father's *Kourita* (a young son of a deceased Mogho
173 Naba chosen as his father's personal representative on earth) and go into
778 exile rather than subject his younger brother to the ordeal. At the same
time, Namende sought to retain royal power equal to that of his brother,
the new Mogho Naba, by taking Oubri's royal amulets with him.³

635 Mane province, too, was founded by one Nyaseme, a son of Koudoumie,
642 who felt that he should have been given the nam. When routed in battle
613 by his elder brother Kouda, he moved into the region of Mane, where he
defeated the indigenous Ninisi and ruled over them. The princes who
● 631 broke away from Ouagadougou during Koudoumie's reign considered
themselves theoretically equal to the supreme ruler. Thus, they took the
title of Dim. By so doing, they dramatized their claim to equality of status,
if not of power, with the Mogho Naba, and their determination to "sub-
mit only to God."⁴

642 The Mossi insist that the relationship between the Mogho Naba and
643 the Dimdamba was similar to that between father and sons, since the
613 Dimdamba were "really the sons of the Mogho Naba" and are said to have
acted as such. This analogy is interesting in view of the Mossi traditional
631 pattern of avoidance—combined with love and tolerance—between fathers
[593] and elder sons.⁵ The Dimdamba were often allowed to act at variance with
the Mogho Naba. Some of them shifted allegiance from kingdom to king-
dom; others usurped the power of the Mogho Naba over smaller districts,
or claimed that they had been given this power; and most of them reg-
ulated their own affairs with little interference from their sovereign. He,
as "father," interfered on occasion in their internal affairs, demanding
help from them and often chastising them if they failed to comply.

634 The Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba often appointed their younger
631 sons or brothers as rulers (Kombemba) of the districts that made up their
613 kingdoms and principalities. In this way, power and authority were kept
642 within the royal clan and its lineages. Nevertheless, in keeping with the
concept of corporate access to the nam, the rulers of these dependencies
had traditions that served to reconcile their claims to kingly or princely
status with their actual subordinate position. District founders, too, were
often portrayed as eldest sons who had been cheated out of their patrimony
or had voluntarily left it to establish new districts. In some cases, the leg-
endary heroes were granted miraculous births as well.

SOVEREIGNTY, KINSHIP, COMMUNITY

634
173 tured slaves, whom he settled behind his compound and in separate villages under their own chiefs. He also welcomed refugees from wars in other territories and established them in special villages under their own chiefs.

● 631
173 The Dimdamba followed a similar practice in establishing power and control. According to Cheron, when Mogho Naba Koudoumie sent his son Tiraongo to conquer the Ninisi of Boussouma, the Ninisi defended themselves fiercely. Tiraongo's advance was thus very slow until he found a Ninisi named Wine, dressed in a panther's skin and hiding in a hole, "who on the promise that his life would be saved, consented to serve as guide to Tiraongo and to make propitiatory sacrifices to the divinities of the country. Thanks to him, the Mossi were able to progress to Somton-gande."^m Boulsa tradition recounts that when Naba Namende left Ouagadougou as the Kourita of Mogho Naba Oubri and took possession of their province, he placed his sons at the head of the principal villages "in order to control it [Boulsa] better." One son was even sent to rule over a village at the request of the local Tengsoba.

634
613 The villages that made up a Mossi district were usually ruled by chiefs who belonged to sub-lineages of the local ruling lineage. These village
778 chiefs and the members of their lineage formed a noble class, the *nakomce*
[565] ("children of the Naba"). As long as a lineage held the nam of a district, all of its sub-lineages had all the privileges of the noble class, regardless of whether they had charge of villages. But if the Mogho Naba deprived
[557] a ruling lineage of the nam by deposing the district chief, all its members were reduced to commoner status. Such people still traced their descent from the Mogho Naba who was the ancestor of their lineage founder, but this relationship ceased to be important unless the lineage recovered the nam of the district. If it did not, the former ruling lineage officially lost its ancient link with the royal clan within a few generations and became a nondescript local group.

634
613 The place of a deposed royal lineage was usually taken by the relatives of the nobles who subsequently acquired the nam of the district. These
778 newcomers were genealogically closer to the ruling Mogho Naba, and
557 formed the new *nakomce* of the district. The new district chief sometimes sent his sons to rule over the villages under his command. But if the village
558 chiefs did not suffer the same fate as their lineage head at the hands of the Mogho Naba, the new district chief often permitted them to retain their posts. Thus they retained possession of the nam but lost their noble status. They served the new district chief in a political sense much as the Tengesoba served him in a ritual sense.

554
603
778 The plight of deposed district *nakomce* shows quite clearly the distinc-

SOVEREIGNTY, KINSHIP, COMMUNITY

634
[778]
[428]

power and authority were inherited by their families in the same manner as among Mossi lineages.

634 The last important category of Mossi chiefs included men who ruled over slave and serf villages. These men were themselves the descendants of slaves and serfs, for no free-born Mossi were placed in such posts. Needless to say, these chiefs were never lineally or collaterally related to the district chiefs, and therefore were never nobles. However, they might be [602] affinally related to district chiefs, and in such cases the relationship was often of some political value.

It must be emphasized that once a man was made chief, he was respected, if not honored, by all the people of the district. In some districts, the Dapore Naba and the Baglere Naba, chiefs of two categories of serfs, were among the most valued assistants of the Kombere Naba. The only [565] people who sometimes refused to honor the village chiefs were the nakomce, [778] who were the holders of the district nam. Nevertheless, they were censored by the Kombere if they were disrespectful to his subordinates. No district chief could allow his government to be jeopardized by the maltreatment of persons who served it. In any conflict between the nam and the kin group, the supremacy of the nam was always maintained.

613 Every Mossi ruler, whether he held the nam of a kingdom, principality, ● 631 district, or village, was *ipso facto* also *Boodkasma* (literally, "family head") 622 of the local segment of his boodoo. The word boodoo refers to patrilineal groups that anthropologists would normally call clans, maximal lineages, major lineages, or minor lineages. The Mossi do not make any terminological distinction between these levels of their segmentary lineage system. Nevertheless, they recognize and use the status differences between these units to limit the access of each unit to the corporate assets of the boodoo. Their major social distinction is drawn between the minor lineage, which is also called boodoo, and its component minimal lineages. Each minimal- [596] lineage unit is called a *babissi* (literally, "father's brother"), and is really a large extended family composed of relatives who had a common ancestor, three, four, or at most five generations ago.

643 The Mogho Naba, for example, was head of his *babissi* as well as ex 613 officio head of the entire royal clan. Those rulers who claimed equality with him claimed that they, not he, were the true heads of the royal clan and the "direct" descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. As a function of their political position, the many princes and district chiefs were heads of their own *babissi* and of the maximal lineage to which their *babissi* belonged. Like the Mogho Naba, they were the ex officio heads of all members 631 of their boodoo who lived in their territory and who claimed descent from 613 the same royal ancestors.

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

51

mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day, when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms. [701]

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital, most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with them.³³ Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses, dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous "elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants. [171] [431] [634]

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated, but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came to an end. [766] [644] [643] [782] [788]

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.³⁴ Their courts were inferior to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy. [631] [184] [643] [644]

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

● 631 52

642 Some of the more important rulers, such as the heads of the Yatenga, Fada-
 643 N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo kingdoms, were chosen by local electoral col-
 184 leges, which did not have to seek the approval of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or notify him of the choices made. Their authority, as we have seen, was supported by claims of equality with Ouagadougou. But, with the exception of the Tenkodogo ruler, they were actually farther removed from the main line of royal descent than the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou.

631 The autonomous Dimdamba had their own electoral colleges, which in some cases were made up of men related to the electoral-college members of the
 666 Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. (For example, the Ouidi Naba of Boulsa was descended from the Ouidi Naba of Ouagadougou.) These local colleges were usually free to nominate and elect the Dimdamba without consulting the Mogho Naba, even though he ratified many nominations." According to Cheron, "The nomination of the Dim of Boulsa did not become definitive until ratified by the Mogho Naba, who was always consulted by the electors and who could impose his own candidate."³⁸ This was not always true; nor did every Mogho Naba refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of autonomous provinces. Whether he did or not often depended on his strength relative to that of the Dimdamba. Once the Dimdamba had been chosen, however, they were installed with ceremonies similar to those for the Ouagadougou ruler.

631 Like their superiors, the Dimdamba had the authority to delegate power to the Kombemba and Tense Nanamse. Some of them also had the right to grant the nam to a fellow Dim. The Boussouma Naba, for instance, could grant it to the Mane Naba." Mogho Nanamse granted such rights to Dimdamba for various reasons. They might do so on the basis of their relative strength vis-à-vis a particular Dim at a particular time, or because they admired him or were closely related to him. However, a Dim exercised sovereignty in his own name, regardless of whether he was subordinate to the Mogho Naba or to another Dim. In contrast, the district chiefs
 (634) and the village chiefs exercised sovereignty on behalf of the Mogho Naba
 (622) or of the Dim in whose territory they resided.

634 The installation ceremonies for the two lower orders of chiefs were not
 645 too different from those for the Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba. For example, when the Nobere district chief died, the provincial minister for Nobere—in this case the Gounga Naba—reported his death to the Mogho Naba. The ruler then summoned one of the deceased chief's officials to the capital to report on the qualifications of all potential candidates for the nam. The provincial minister, in turn, dispatched one of his own representatives to the district to verify the reports he had received. It was only when this

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

to the control of his brother at Nobere. The other district, still called Vooko but now half its former size, was given to a descendant of its deposed ruler. The relationship between these two rulers and the Nobere Naba was that of vassals and lord. They did not stand up in the presence of the Nobere Naba, but knelt or sat on the ground and uncovered their heads in respect to him. The Nobere Naba traditionally appointed the village chiefs in the Vooko and Nobila districts; however, he sometimes granted that right to the two district chiefs. Furthermore, the traditional provincial administrator could not transmit any orders to those two district chiefs without first notifying the Nobere Naba. In their everyday affairs the two chiefs were autonomous, but the Nobere Naba could challenge and countermand all their actions. Actually, he did seem to exercise greater control over Vooko than over Nobila. One may even say that the relationship between the Nobere district chief and the Vooko chief was like that between the Mogho Naba and his district chiefs, and that the relationship between the Nobere Naba and the Nobila Naba was comparable to the one between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba. We have seen that the Dimdamba claimed equality with the Mogho Naba because of their alleged descent from a putative common ancestor. The Nobere Naba was actually more closely related to the Nobila Naba than to the Vooko Naba, and his behavior toward them reflected this fact. In both cases, the relationships involved were determined by the concept of joint possession of the nam by the ruling family.

A district chief was not required to notify his superior when he wished to confer the nam upon a village chief. In this choice he was completely autonomous and subject only to tradition. The fact is that on the district and village levels, traditions were more frequently modified in the face of practical political and socio-economic considerations. This occurred primarily because the district chief had closer relations with persons who possessed goods and services or who controlled them directly than did the chiefs on higher levels. Secondly, he was often under great temptation to allow presents or bribes to affect his choice of subordinate chiefs.

When a Tenga Naba died, the district chief permitted control of the village to revert to its Tengaoba. If there was none, the village was "given" to the eldest man among the aboriginal Ninisi lineages or to the eldest member of the ruling lineage segment. However, none of these persons was considered anything but a trustee of the village, and even when the trustee was a potential candidate for the nam, the Mossi did not feel that this man had any advantage over his competitors. Whoever held control of the village was held responsible for its affairs by the district administrator until the new chief was elected.

Competition for chieftainship on this level was very keen because of the

57 634

175

669

778

634

778

[622]

[631]

634

778

622

[662]

634

622

[793]

[P. 60]

IV

ADMINISTRATION

142 THE Mossi always looked to their rulers, especially to the Mogho Nanamse,
 631 the Dimdamba, and the Kombemba, to determine administrative policies
 and to pronounce on all relevant issues. All foreigners who requested infor-
 825 mation were told, "You must talk to the chief." The Mossi believed that
 men cannot live without chiefs, and insisted that even animals have chiefs.
 Mossi rulers were therefore expected to ensure internal tranquillity in times
 of peace and to protect their subjects and territories in times of war. The
 expectation that they would also provide impartial judgment is best ex-
 pressed by a dictum of the Ouagadougou people: "The truth is at Ouaga-
 769 dougou." Finally, Mossi chiefs were held responsible for inducing the an-
 cestors to bring health and prosperity to their subjects. To this end, they
 supervised and participated in rituals to their ancestors and encouraged the
 people in every territory, district, village, and compound to do likewise.
 In return, the people paid homage and allegiance to their chiefs and pro-
 vided them with the goods and services they needed to support the admin-
 istrative process.

643 The nature of the administrative relationship between the Mogho Naba
 631 of Ouagadougou, the rulers of Yatenga, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo,
 642 and the autonomous Dimdamba was not clear to the early visitors to Mossi
 175 country, and remains a matter of controversy. Two conflicting principles
 were always at work: seniority with respect to the name and claims of close
 descent from Ouédraogo and Oubri on the one hand, and relative political
 strength or military power on the other. The stronger a ruler, the less he
 deferred to his lineal seniors. He might even claim a supremacy over them
 that came close to a claim of seniority. When Barth visited the Sudan in
 1843, he was told that the Mossi country was "split into a number of small
 principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only
 slight homage to the principality of Woghododogo." Barth reports, how-
 ever, that the Dim of Bouasouma was "probably the most powerful of the
 Mossi chiefs at the . . . time, especially with regard to cavalry." Similarly,

ADMINISTRATION

Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confederacies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."

Delafose tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou] does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emperors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the obedience of their subjects or tributaries."

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754-89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

61 643
631
642
175
[486]
[643]

[648]
[651]
[701]

643
642
681
628
175

ADMINISTRATION

643⁶²

642 allegiance to the Yatenga. The situation lasted throughout Kango's reign,

631 "but as soon as he died, the Yako chiefs ceased to pay allegiance to his suc-
628 cessors and paid homage, as before, to the court of Ouagadougou."⁷ About

175 fifty years later, Yako district was again captured by a Yatenga ruler, Naba

Tougouri (ca. 1806-22), who deposed the reigning chief and installed his own. The deposed chief fled to his sovereign at Ouagadougou for aid and safety. He did receive sanctuary and eventually reconquered his principality, but there is no evidence that the Mogho Naba gave him any active support. Similarly, when another Yatenga ruler, Naba Totebaldbo (ca. 1834-50), once more conquered Yako as well as Riziam, another dependency of Ouagadougou, the Mogho Naba took no action. It was only after Totebaldbo's death that Riziam seceded from Yatenga and returned its allegiance to Ouagadougou. Yako did not submit to Ouagadougou's rule until some time later, when it revolted against Totebaldbo's son.⁸ Similarly, both Mogho Naba Sanum and Mogho Naba Wobogo had difficulty in controlling a civil war between Yatenga and Yako which they felt would cause European travelers to think ill of the Mossi. During Crozat's visit to Ouagadougou, Mogho Naba Wobogo asked the combatants to cease fighting, but his efforts failed because "Yako would have liked to obey, but Yatenga refused."

The Ouagadougou rulers experienced less difficulty with the weaker Tenkodogo kingdom, which seldom attacked their vassals or territories. Instead, the rulers of Tenkodogo often sought the aid of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou against their enemies or rebellious subjects. For example, when the Busansi subjects of the Tenkodogo Naba rebelled against him in the fifteenth century, Mogho Naba Dawoema of Ouagadougou went to his aid and defeated them.⁹ However, when Korongo, the Tenkodogo Naba, asked Mogho Naba Wobogo to help him defeat a contestant for the nam in 1894, the Ouagadougou ruler refused and said he would acknowledge the victor.⁹ In this case, personal considerations seem to have dictated the Mogho Naba's reply.

The rulers of Ouagadougou appear to have taken greater interest in the affairs of the Dimdamba. Here again, however, intervention was conditioned by personal considerations, and especially by relative strength. Failure to be prudent in this respect often resulted in disaster. Mogho Naba Doulougou's insistence on punishing Naba Piga (1806-23), a ruler of the Boussouma principality, resulted in his own death. One of Piga's subjects had fled to Ouagadougou to evade punishment, and the Mogho Naba had returned him with the injunction that he should be imprisoned but not killed. Nevertheless, Piga had the prisoner executed. Moreover, he sent a

ADMINISTRATION

disrespectful message to the Mogho Naba asking that a horse which a Fulani had stolen from him and presented to the ruler be returned. Doulougou sent an army to chastise Piga, who quickly fled and later appealed to the Mogho Naba for pardon. No sooner had this pardon been granted than Piga again offended the Mogho Naba by granting refuge to his wayward son, who had been expelled from Ouagadougou. The Mogho Naba subsequently forgave his son, but he decided to punish the recalcitrant Piga once and for all. Piga fled at the approach of the royal army, but Doulougou, who had accompanied his troops, was wounded by an enemy arrow and died shortly after his return to Ouagadougou.¹⁰

A later Mogho Naba, Sanum (ca. 1861), fought, defeated, and executed Naba Zande of Boulsa for taxing the Boulsa people so heavily that they rebelled. After Zande was succeeded by his brother Yemde (ca. 1863-72), the Mogho Naba continued to intervene in Boulsa's affairs and eventually had Yemde executed. Yemde's undoing was the result of his inability or unwillingness to implement the Mogho Naba's desire—which was contrary to Mossi custom—to elect a ten-year-old boy to the chieftainship of Koupela district. The Koupela chief's brother ignored his young nephew and seized the nam; Yemde sent an army to depose him, but his men were routed. Suspecting treachery on Yemde's part, Mogho Naba Sanum sent an army to defeat and depose him and to place his father's brother in command of Boulsa. Yemde defeated the Mogho Naba's army. His victory was short-lived, however, because the Mogho Naba sent a larger army and routed his forces. Yemde fled to the territory of the Boussouma Dim and requested asylum. The Boussouma ruler, Ligidi, did not wish to incur the wrath of the Mogho Naba and dispatched Yemde to Ouagadougou. Yemde apparently convinced the Mogho Naba of his loyalty, but he was executed because he had inadvertently violated the rule that no descendant of a Kourita might see a Mogho Naba and live.¹¹

Ligidi, in turn, found himself in conflict with the Mogho Naba. After surrendering Yemde to his sovereign, he had proceeded to Boulsa and seized some of the prisoner's property. At first the Mogho Naba paid no attention, but when he had made peace with Yemde's son, Kiba, he ordered Ligidi to return the property. Ligidi refused to do so and consequently became involved in a series of wars against Kiba and the Mogho Naba. Ligidi died of natural causes before peace was restored, leaving a legacy of hostility between Ouagadougou and Boussouma. Either in complicity with the ruling Mogho Naba (Wobogo) or in an attempt to gain his favor, the electors named Ligidi's brother, Kom, to the nam and ignored his son and rightful heir, Venewende. This unfortunate young man had no one to

63 643
631
642
628
175

ADMINISTRATION

643 64

631 turn to, and fled to Wobogo for safety. Wishing to maintain good rela-
 642 tions with Kom, the Mogho Naba forced Venewende to return to Bous-
 628 souma, but with the injunction that he should not be killed. Nevertheless,
 175 the Boussouma ruler had the young prince executed. The angry Mogho
 Naba threatened reprisal and declared that "if the Boussouma chief was
 not careful, it would be too bad for all his people, because they would fare
 as badly as their chief."¹² He did not have an opportunity to carry out his
 threats, however, because the French arrived soon afterwards.

Whereas some Mogho Nanamse took an active interest in the affairs of
 their Dimdamba or even tried to control them, others hesitated to interfere
 with disobedient or recalcitrant subordinates, especially when they fought
 and quarreled among themselves. Mogho Naba Oubya did not interfere
 when a Boussouma ruler, Pougoula (1745-67), bragging that no one in the
 nation was strong enough to depose him, arrogantly annexed the Ouaga-
 dougou province of Pisila and chased its ruler into Yatenga. Pougoula then
 gave the chieftainship to the fugitive's son, on condition that he should
 henceforth recognize his sovereignty.¹³ On another occasion, a recalcitrant
 Boussouma Dim called Zabo (ca. 1767-84) defeated and punished the people
 of the Mane principality for rejecting the ruler he had chosen for them.
 They insisted that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had given Zabo the
 right to express his preference for a certain ruler, but not the right of choice
 itself. They appealed to Mogho Naba Waraga for help, but he ignored
 them. It may well be that Waraga was too involved in a war with the re-
 calcitrant Riziam Naba to interfere, but there is no evidence that he ever
 censured Zabo. Again, Mogho Naba Sanum apparently took no part when
 Zende (ca. 1862-76), the ruler of Tema principality, and Totoabo, the ruler
 of Yako, joined forces against the ruler of La in a dispute over an abducted
 wife.¹⁴ Perhaps, like other Mossi rulers, he did not care to deal with men
 who fought over women.

The relationship between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba, then,
 apparently varied in accordance with the persons involved and their rela-
 tive strength. Sometimes they quarreled and fought; sometimes the Mogho
 Naba remained aloof from the Dimdamba's affairs; and sometimes the
 Dimdamba obeyed their sovereign and came to his aid. The one aspect of
 this relationship that seems to stand out, especially when the Dimdamba
 had no serious grievance, is their reluctance to fight against the Mogho
 Naba. Even Piga, the most belligerent in a long line of quarrelsome Bous-
 souma rulers, always fled when Mogho Naba Douougou attacked him,
 because "he did not wish to oppose his sovereign."¹⁵ As we have seen,
 Yemde did fight against Mogho Naba Sanum, but he did so mainly be-

ADMINISTRATION

cause he thought Sanum had attacked him unjustly. For such acts of war, the Dimdamba involved usually lost their lives, and in at least one such case a Dim was turned over to the Mogho Naba by another Dim. We have seen that Dimdamba occasionally came to the aid of the Mogho Naba against another Dim.

A question of some importance is whether this relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the rulers of independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities was characteristic of Mossi society or a rather late development. Was warfare the natural concomitant of a system in which the normally powerful Ouagadougou ruler was sometimes too weak to command allegiance from his peers and subordinates? Did the Mogho Naba resort to warfare as the only possible means of exercising his authority when his commands were challenged or ignored? Delafosse states, "Sometimes . . . especially in very recent times, discord arose between the emperor [of Ouagadougou] and some of his vassal kings: thus Naba Sanum had to fight against the desire for independence of the kings of Boussouma and Boulssa."¹⁰ Delafosse seems to suggest that the Mossi people were undergoing a period of stress when the Europeans arrived, and were faced with significant new administrative problems.

Here Binger appears to support Delafosse's view:

Ever since he acceded to the throne, [Mogho Naba Sanum] has been compelled to govern the Mossi with unmitigated despotism. His fear of losing power led him to take such severe measures that he was forced to relax them. As soon as his major vassals saw this, they took these concessions as signs of fear and began to conspire secretly against him. Today, the chiefs of Mani, Boussouma, Yako, and Koupela represent forces with which Naba Sanum will have to reckon. . . . Before long, the Mossi empire will break up; the country will organize into confederacies like those of Beledougou and Yatenga.¹¹

It is not completely clear, however, whether Binger really understood the intricacies of the Mossi political organization. He lists as "vassals" of the Mogho Naba such territories as Mane, Kaya, Koupela, Bonsa, Boussouma, Djitenga, Boulssa, Dakay, and Doulougou, as though they were all related to Ouagadougou in the same way. In reality, some were autonomous and some were directly dependent on the Ouagadougou ruler. It is possible that at the time of Binger's visit, the relations between the Mogho Naba and his subordinates were so fluid that the outsider had difficulty in understanding them. If this is the case, then the situation in Mossi country had indeed changed when the Europeans came in.

Crozat, who says the Mossi governmental structure was feudal in na-

65 643
631
642
628
175

643
631
642
628
174
114

ADMINISTRATION

643
642⁶⁶

- 631 ture, offers what is probably the best analysis of power relations among the
628 important Mossi chiefs. In commenting upon the Mogho Naba's inability
174 to stop the war between Yako and Yatenga he asks, "How could it be
114 otherwise? With what sanctions could this king without an army back up
his orders if he ventured to give any? . . . In short, when the Ouagadougou ruler speaks, he is sometimes obeyed. If he is, all is well; if he is not, all is still well. Everything remains as before."¹⁸ Crozat was mistaken if he believed that the Mogho Naba did not have a fighting force. What he did not have was a standing army to exercise his power whenever he wished. When he was able to summon an army, he was effective; when he was not, he had little power over any territory but his own. Crozat, like Binger, gives a strange picture of the political relationship between the Mogho Naba and the other rulers. He tells us that in the Mossi political hierarchy, "after the ruler of Ouagadougou comes the ruler of Boussouma, then the Yatenga ruler, and then the ruler of Yako."¹⁹ Yatenga was traditionally independent of Ouagadougou, whereas Boussouma and Yako were simply autonomous principalities dependent on the Mogho Naba. It is possible that Crozat mistook the relative power of these various political entities for a hierarchical relationship. It is also possible that at the time of his visit, the Dimdamba felt sufficiently powerful to ignore the traditional hierarchy as far as their political relationship with other rulers was concerned, and were simply acknowledging relative gradations of power.

- 643 Clearly, the sovereignty of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou over the
642 independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities depended chiefly on
628 military might. The stronger a Mogho Naba was, the more actively he tried to control the internal administration of the autonomous principalities and to exercise police powers over them or on their behalf. However, most Mogho Nanamse were content to claim superiority or control over the independent kingdoms and refrained from meddling in their affairs.

- 643 Within the Mogho Naba's own kingdom, however, the situation was
635 different. Here, like other important Mossi rulers, he directed the administrative apparatus. For administrative purposes, the kingdom of Ouagadougou was divided into five large provinces (*weto*; sing. *wetogho*; or [642] *tolem*, from *so*, "command"). Together they included some three hundred [642] districts, in which there were over four thousand villages inhabited by some 862,000 persons.²⁰ (Not included here were districts and villages directly administered by the Mogho Naba.) The provinces were not compact physical entities, because their component units were scattered throughout the country. To be sure, some of the districts within a province were close together or even contiguous, but many others stood alongside districts be-

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

109

less of the amount of millet harvested from the Mogho Naba's fields, there had to be one hundred baskets full of grain. If the number of baskets filled with the Mogho Naba's grain fell short of the mark, the serfs and slaves had to make up the difference with the produce of their own fields. The ceremony concluded with sacrifices to the royal ancestors, after which the Mogho Naba's wives, daughters, and sisters gave beer and kola nuts to the laborers. 243
643
644
796
[265]
[769]

As head of the central government, the Mogho Naba received revenue in the form of money and livestock which the district chiefs collected from the village people. These were given to him during an elaborate annual ceremony called the "Basgha" ("feast of the royal ancestors"). Several days before this post-harvest festival, the district chiefs and their retainers arrived in the capital and lodged with their provincial ministers. At a designated time during the ceremony, the district chiefs and nobles went to the palace. In provincial contingents and led by their ministers, they walked up to the sovereign's throne and gave the Mossi salute. After they had returned to their places, their servants gave the royal pages the presents they had brought to the palace. 643
651
796

The Dimdamba apparently made their annual contribution to the Mogho Naba at the time of the Basgha. There is one report that they took this opportunity to send gifts to the ruler's son, the Djiba Naba, as well. The Dimdamba customarily sent the Mogho Naba part of the goods they had seized in combat against non-Mossi peoples, as well as a tax (*fado*) out of the goods they had inherited from their predecessors.⁶ There is also some evidence that the Mogho Naba solicited goods from the Dimdamba at other times. Crozat says: 631
651
643
[727]

During my first visit to Yako, three envoys from Ouagadougou were at the chief's house. They were tax collectors. They had come to offer the vassal a silver bracelet sent by the sovereign. The Yako Naba responded by sending horses, captives, and cowries to Ouagadougou.⁶ [661]

Crozat could not understand this reciprocity between the Mogho Naba and his vassals, and questions whether the Mogho Naba really collected taxes from them. He concludes that the Mogho Naba did receive taxes, "but these are never given to him except in the form of presents which are reciprocated."⁶ Crozat found it puzzling and disturbing that many of the Dimdamba had not given the Mogho Naba any "taxes" for several years. He indicated, moreover, that they did not wish to pay taxes to the Ouagadougou ruler even under the guise of an exchange of presents. This was especially true of the Yatenga Naba, who had not sent the Mogho Naba any presents for six or seven years prior to 1890. Crozat surmised that 631
651
643
114

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

110

631

651

643

114

[648]

[669]

because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived. But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou. It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

643

645

692

651

[431]

The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

643

651

634

768

[429]

The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba, and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (*fado*) from the estates of deceased district chiefs. In collecting the *fado*, the Mogho Naba first retained the horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the *fado*, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu fa*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the *fado*, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

643

645

651

431

[487]

The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.* The Mossi (especially the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions. According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

they might take the lives and property of their subjects. There are many stories of avaricious chiefs who convicted wealthy commoners of spurious crimes and had them executed or banished in order to seize their wealth.

There are also stories of twin tricksters, Raogo, a boy, and Poko, a girl, two *enfants terribles* who always succeeded in outwitting and killing avaricious chiefs. When I asked a district chief to explain the significance of the Raogo and Poko tales, he replied that they were "meaningless stories told by children who do not understand how difficult it is for a chief to command and protect men." This remark prompted one of his officials to add that in olden days, people gladly supported the Mogho Naba and his chiefs in order to be safe from their enemies—a statement which might have been made by a conscientious government official anywhere. However, whether commoners or chiefs, all Mossi believed that men must have government, and that without it chaos would prevail.

The Mossi political organization was subject to severe strains. For one thing, its economic basis was not very strong. True, goods and services were channeled to the capital from the smallest areas, and in time this permitted the establishment of increasingly complex governmental structures. Nevertheless, the Mossi fiscal system was not highly developed, and much of the revenue the rulers received came to them in the form of legal fees and gifts. Moreover, most of these revenues were irregular in nature.

Despite this fact, the Mossi believed that their rulers were wealthy—and there can be no doubt that they were wealthier than their subjects. Nevertheless, visiting Europeans found little difference between the standard of living of the chiefs and that of the people. Binger would have us believe that Mogho Naba Sanum bragged so much about imaginary wealth, including 10,000 horses, that he "managed to convince himself of it."²⁸ Binger's subsequent remarks about Sanum's resources are illuminating even if somewhat biased, because they throw light on the economic basis of the Ouagadougou kingdom. He tells us that Sanum's revenues were

not well regulated. He lives on gifts and offerings which people have brought him with the aim of obtaining justice, or to demand something from him. He sometimes sends a band of men to capture slaves in Kipirsi country, or at least supports such ventures. But these revenues, like those of all the black chiefs, are not sufficient, because these men are prone to squander their resources. As a result, these sovereigns are compelled to use expedients in order to procure horses and other commodities. Thus, like the rulers of Tieba, Pegue, and Kong, Naba Sanum still has captives in villages devoted to agriculture, but he does not take proper care of these villages. If he does not receive enough millet in the form of gifts, he must sell his slaves in order to procure it.²⁷

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

125643

Binger's statement about the "squandering" to which "all the black chiefs" are prone reveals his ignorance of the nature, role, and function of West African chiefs in general and of Mossi chiefs in particular. These men were often the center of redistribution systems that embraced their entire territory. The Mossi chiefs did not necessarily squander their resources when they used them to support their household, their administrative staff, and even visitors to their realm. A rather large portion of the millet the Mogho Naba received was not even used by his own household, but was held for gifts to visiting strangers. Binger himself benefited from the generosity of Mogho Naba Sanum, and he provides us with excellent data about how Boukary Koutou distributed his resources: "I can say that never has a chief given me food, kola nuts, and beer as often as he did. I received things to eat two or three times a day."⁷⁴ No Mossi chief could have done less. This was a role that chiefs had to play, and they lost power and prestige if they proved inhospitable or parsimonious either to visiting strangers or to their own subjects. 434 574 (114)

Binger's lack of insight into the economic basis of the Mossi political organization also kept him from obtaining a clear understanding of the political system itself. For example, he saw the loose political organization of the Mossi as a sign of decadence, and felt that the Ouagadougou kingdom was too weak to survive for any length of time: 642 114

Before long the Mossi empire will break up, and the country will be organized into a confederacy like Beledougou and Yatenga. This is an event that we Europeans can only favor. Experience has shown us that as soon as a Negro chief commands more than 2,000 people, he dreams of empire; his needs grow, and he tries to expand. Since his revenues are small, he labors under a deficit, which he must remedy with slave raids. In a confederacy the chiefs do not reach this point so rapidly. As soon as one of them begins to rise, the others can band together and nip his ambition in the bud.⁷⁵

It is quite true that many of the political systems in the western Sudan had a loose character similar to that of a "confederacy." This was not due to the vigilance of neighboring chiefs, however. From time to time, such powerful rulers as Sundiata, Mansa Musa, Sonni Ali, El Hadj Omar, and Samory Touré did arise and conquer vast areas, but they were unable to sustain their gains over extended periods.

The political organization of the Mossi was not decadent but structurally weak—its economic base was never strong enough to support a higher degree of centralization. Strong chiefs only tested the limits of the system; they could not change the system itself. 642

[P.126]

VIII

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

796
642 RELIGION AND RITUAL played an important role in supporting and preserv-
[769] ing the Mossi political system. Religio-political ceremonies were centered
[776] around the ancestors (Keemse) and the earth deities (Tengkouga); the
otiose high god (Ouennam or Naba Zid Ouende) had a very minor role.

769 The political importance of ancestor veneration lay in the fact that every
642 Mossi chief claimed Nyennega of Dagomba and her descendants, Ouedra-
778 ogo and Oubri, as his ancestors. Furthermore, possession of the amulets of
[613] Rialle, Nyennega's husband and Ouedraogo's father, legitimized possession
of the nam. In order to rule, a Moaga had either to be a member of a royal
lineage still in possession of the nam or to have received the nam from such
669 a lineage. No Moaga ever tried to usurp the nam of a kingdom or princi-
778 pality without trying to steal the royal amulets at the same time; nor, if his
642 rebellion was successful, did he ever fail to claim that he had stolen the
769 amulets or had received them as a gift. Thus Yadega, who rebelled against
his father's brother, Mogho Naba Koudoumie, and founded the Yatenga
kingdom, declared that he had obtained Rialle's amulets. He claimed that
they had been given to him by his sister, Pabre, who had stolen them from
Ouagadougou and had thus deprived that kingdom of any legitimate sanc-
tions for power. Thus, when the Yatenga people declare that they are equal
to Ouagadougou, they add that the only "amulets" that still legitimize the
nam of the Ouagadougou dynasty are the droppings left behind by Pabre's
horse as she fled northward.

769 Similarly, all the princes who founded principalities and proclaimed
642 their independence of Ouagadougou defended their action on the grounds
643 that they, being as close to the main line of descent as the Mogho Naba,
[631] were also entitled to rule. The younger sons of deceased Mogho Nanamse
[634] who were banished from the capital as Kouritadamba and who subse-
quently became provincial Dimdamba also stressed their relationship to
the royal ancestors. Even those district chiefs whose ancestors had prob-

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

ably been younger sons sent to rule in conquered territories claimed that their ancestors were direct descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. Thus, to the Mossi, the power to rule was intimately linked to closeness of descent from the royal ancestors. The supernatural power of these ancestors, and the vigilance they were believed to maintain over the affairs of their descendants, were regarded as important factors in Mossi government.

From the moment when the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or any other Mossi ruler "drank the namtibo" and thereby received the nam of his ancestors, he had the right—indeed, the duty—to offer sacrifices to these ancestors in the name of his subjects. Every night, throughout Mossi country, the Baloum Naba of every ruler performed an act of supplication (Kwaga Basgha) to the ancestors. He beseeched them to protect the subjects of their descendants through the night, to maintain peace in Mossi country, and to grant health, children, and prosperity to all Mossi. This nightly ceremony was climaxed yearly by an elaborate ritual in honor of the ancestors (called the Basgha in some areas, and the Pelegha, Filigha, or Kinkiriga in others) that began at the highest levels of the government and ultimately linked every Mossi chief and lineage head.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the other Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba, initiated this ceremony in his own kingdom. His celebration, called "M'barengma," was held at the end of the Mossi agricultural year and after the Soretasgho. Thus, the M'barengma was a New Year's festival in thanksgiving for good crops, as well as the annual Feast of the Dead. A few weeks before the first moon of the new year (the *ki-basgha* or *ki-pelegha*), the Mogho Naba ordered his soghondamba and samande-kamba to clean up the palace buildings and courtyards—an activity intended to notify the ever-vigilant ancestors that preparations were being made to offer sacrifices in their honor. A short time later, the Mogho Naba gave grain from his fields to the Pughtiema so she could prepare millet water for the sacrifices. Present-day Mossi insist that part of the grain came from the first ears harvested that year and part from those of the previous year. This was supposed to symbolize the continuity between crops, mirroring the continuity between the ruler and his ancestors. A few days before the principal ceremony, the Mogho Naba ordered the Larhalle Naba to pour millet water and sacrifice chickens on the graves of former Mogho Nanamse.

Shortly before the *ki-basgha* moon appeared, the ruler had to leave his palace at night to elude the ancestors, who had been attracted by the preparations and who were expected to be angry when they discovered that the sacrifices were not yet ready. The unjust ruler feared ancestral sanctions; the just ruler that his ancestors might want him to join them. One night he

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

climax of this gift-giving came when the ruler sent the Bendere Naba about 19,000 cowries and a slave.^a This ceremony terminated at nightfall.

The close of the Mogho Naba's Basgha heralded the start of similar ceremonies throughout his kingdom. The heads of the other Mossi kingdoms and the Dimdamba were free to hold their own Basgha when they wished; but the Ouagadougou ruler's own subjects, including the provincial ministers, district chiefs, village chiefs, and lineage heads, apparently were not. One reason for this, aside from respect for the ruler, was that the important officials' head wives had to wait for the yeast (*dabili*) from the Mogho Naba's beer before they could prepare the sacrificial offerings for their husbands' ancestors. This *dabili* went from district to district or to several districts at once, depending on whether the chiefs celebrated Basgha at the same time or successively. Thus, the *dabili* from the capital united all the wives of the royal clan, and made for both a ritual continuity in the veneration of all ancestors and a strengthening of religious and political bonds.

The Basgha ceremonies on the district level were much less elaborate than those held at Ouagadougou, but just as important. The district chief, too, had his buildings repaired and his grain distributed for sacrifices for the ancestors. A few days before the actual ceremony, he ordered the Gande Naba to pour millet water on the graves of recently deceased chiefs and to sacrifice chickens there. As in Ouagadougou, these sacrifices were offered to induce the chiefly ancestors to grant the villagers health, food, and children. Unlike the Mogho Naba, most district chiefs did not ritually hide from their ancestors for several nights prior to the ceremony. Some of them did change their sleeping place within the compound every night, and the court people always slept indoors during this period. On the night of the Basgha itself, however, the district chiefs did not sleep in their compounds.

As in Ouagadougou, the Pughtiema performed the main ceremony by pouring millet water as a libation to the ancestors who visited her hut. She was assisted by the Baloum Naba, who had possession of the namtibo. Apparently, the district chief remained in hiding and took no part in the ceremony. But he was the main figure in the morning ceremony, which differed little from that of Ouagadougou. In some districts the Tengoba performed a public sacrifice to the ancestors. He was given the namtibo—sacred objects that had belonged to former district chiefs—and poured libations and sacrificed chickens to all of the chief's ancestors. He also prayed both to these ancestors and to his own on the chief's behalf, and beseeched them to grant long life and happiness to the district population. He also declared that the sacred objects would seek out and kill any enemies of the local ruler, wherever they might be. Once this ritual had been com-

THE EUROPEAN CONQUEST

141

not enter Mossi territory. Nevertheless, he obtained rather precise information on the important caravan routes leading from Timbuktu through the Mossi trade centers of Ouagadougou, Kaya, Yako, and Koupela, down to Salaga and other towns in Ghana, and even across to Sansane Mango in Togoland. His data on the Mossi are invaluable:

The whole triangle interposed between the Niger toward the north, and the country of the Eastern Mandingoes or Wangarawa toward the south, appears to be inhabited by a single race of people whose language, although they are divided into several states and nations, nevertheless appears originally to have been the same stock. It is very probable that this race in ancient times occupied the whole upper course of the Niger, and that this tract may have been wrested from it in later times by the Songhai and the Mandingoes, especially that section of the latter which is generally called Bambara. These are the Gourma toward the N.E., the Tombo toward the N.W., and between them the Mossi. . . . The strongest among these pagan kingdoms five centuries ago, and even at the present moment, is that of the Mossi, although the country is split into a number of small principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only some slight homage to the ruler of the principality of Woghodogo.

175*
[177]
[114]

[101]

[631] •

[115]

[797]

[639]

[567]

Europe learned more about the Mossi from Sigismund Koelle, who visited Sierra Leone in 1854. His informant was one Andrew Dixon, who had lived in Koupela before being captured and sold into slavery. He furnished information on the location of the Mossi, their wars with the Busansi, and their important commercial and political relations with the Ashanti.* Koelle's report, taken in conjunction with the reports of Dupuis, Bowdich, Clapperton, and Barth, shows that the Ashanti, like the Hausa and other coastal peoples, were protecting their trade when they attempted to isolate the peoples of the interior from the Europeans. But as soon as the British defeated the Ashanti in the war of 1873-74, the Sudan was opened and adventurers poured in. In 1877 and 1878, two missionaries of the Basel Mission visited the northern regions of Ghana, and subsequently gave a good description of Mossi commerce in that area.* Lonsdale, who visited Salaga in 1881, found among the traders in the market "the Mossi with his cattle, sheep, and slaves—these latter, generally Gurunsi, are not exposed for sale in the street or market, but can be seen where the owner resides."¹⁰

The activities of the various European nations in West Africa and other regions at this time led to military and diplomatic difficulties, which the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 was convened to resolve. Agreement was reached to assign "spheres of influence" to the various European nations, to regulate trade, and to provide for arbitration between rival claimants of conquered or "protected" territories. In West Africa, this meant the end

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

155 175*

laborers.³ In desperation, the French sought help from those very chiefs whose power they wished to curb, especially from the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, whom they regarded as the supreme ruler of the Mossi. However, they met with the same resistance:

177
648*
643

The king of the Mossi, Kouka Naba [Mogho Naba Sighiri], is lavish with vows of devotion and fidelity, but these vows are never translated into action. It is impossible to obtain from him any pertinent information about the country—he tries to give the impression that he knows nothing about it—or any information about Boukary Koutou [then in exile, but still a threat to the French], of whom he pretends to have no news.⁴

One cannot tell whether the Mogho Naba knew about Boukary Koutou's activities, but it is highly unlikely that he could have given the French much information about the country even if he had wished to do so. No Mogho Naba ever possessed this kind of information. The Dimdamba and the Kombemba paid allegiance and tribute to their superior ruler, but did not furnish him with specific data on their principalities and districts.

[63]
[651]

The death of Mogho Naba Sighiri in 1905 enabled the French officials to secure the election of a Mogho Naba they could control and to change the Mossi political organization. Sighiri's principal heir was his sixteen-year-old son, Saidou Congo, who in the opinion of the Mossi electoral college "could not keep the country" because of his youth. The French, keenly aware that they could more easily control a young ruler, insisted that Saidou be given the nam, and he became Mogho Naba Kom. Two years later, in 1907, the French began to reorganize the kingdom of Ouagadougou and the surrounding territories. They suppressed certain districts and principalities, enlarged some, and unified others by granting them control over the smaller political entities that lay near or within their boundaries. These changes were often made without regard for the traditional hierarchies, and many district chiefs found themselves controlling other district chiefs, while Dimdamba were reduced to the level of district chiefs.

175*
177
643
648*

The French also reorganized the provincial administration, replacing the five ministers with persons more favorably disposed toward their rule. The Larhalla Naba was replaced in 1908 after he had mysteriously left the capital for Koudougou. The Kamsaogho Naba was deposed by the Mogho Naba, and was replaced by a nominee of the French. As in the case of the district chiefs, the French shifted the territorial responsibilities of these ministers "without taking into consideration the hierarchy prevailing among [them]. The intention of the administration apparently was to reward certain young and capable ministers to the detriment of those who were old."⁵ One commentator concludes: "In view of the youth of the

175*
177
648*
645

[Pre-World War II Period]

* 175:62

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

* 177 to cut down the length of service of our draftees as much as possible.²⁶
 * 648

The Governor of the Upper Volta made full use of the Mossi chiefs to develop the colony, and although some chiefs may have objected to the labor imposed on their subjects, others seemingly approved. In commenting upon cotton production in the Upper Volta, Ossendowski writes:

* 175 Cotton is an artificial crop and one the value of which is not entirely clear to the natives. The chiefs with their superior intellect, seeing the profit to be obtained from the plantation of cotton, are continually enlarging the area of the fields, and resort to draft animals, ploughs, manures, and even partial irrigation of the fields; nevertheless, the great mass of the population submit rather unwillingly to those instructions of the administration which aim at the development of cotton cultivation in the colony.²⁸
 * 177
 * 648
 248

- [631] Delavignette's comment on the role of the chiefs in cotton production seems to indicate that they, like their subjects, had to conform to the desires of the French:

[464] [The French] lived at Ouagadougou in the shade of the great Nabas, and because [the latter] possessed servitors and were at the head of docile provinces, [the French] dignified by the name of "custom," and in any case adjudged convenient, this domestication of the peasants whereby they were forced to work in a common field under the authority of the village chief, and for a salary which was theoretically to be distributed among them afterwards. Sometimes cercle guards were stationed in these fields.²⁷
 [622]
 [465]

* 175 The Governor carried out many of Van Vollenhoven's reforms concerning the Mossi chiefs, and instructed his district administrators to
 * 177
 * 648 respect the chiefs and to seek their aid in governing the people. De Beauminy, an administrator in the Upper Volta, contrasts the old policy with
 631 the new:

[643] Not without reason, we followed the rule of regarding the great black chiefs as exploiters of their peoples, and this caused us to introduce and to maintain a policy aimed at reducing their authority. Later on we were compelled to abandon this policy in the face of discouraging results. During the past few years we have restored power and prestige to the Mogho Naba and to his vassals, the Mossi chiefs. They are now paid by us, and they administer their kingdoms and territories under our guidance and under the supervision of an extremely small European staff (one official for every 60,000 inhabitants). The rulers are now helping us to restore, on a newer and sounder basis, a political edifice which had once appeared to be on the point of collapse.²⁹

An official report also stated that the Mossi chiefs

understand that the time of their absolute power, and the privileges of their "medieval lordships," are fated to wear away gradually. Certainly, the main-

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

tenance of their authority and prestige is indispensable, and the local administration is firmly resolved not only to preserve it but even to strengthen it. Henceforth, however, this authority and prestige will be upheld on the basis of principles and methods better suited to the new order of things which has been established."

The administration tried to educate some of the sons of the chiefs "in order to attune them to progress and to the fundamental principles of our policy."^{175*} It encountered some resistance from chiefs who resented what they considered the "recruitment" of their children for education, and from other chiefs who were afraid that, if educated, their sons might be converted to Catholicism and thus would be unable to perform the traditional religio-political ceremonies. Nevertheless, one official states quite proudly that "Despite some resistance, the results obtained so far are encouraging and of such a nature as to allay our anxiety: 671 sons of chiefs are now attending our schools, among them 52 sons of provincial chiefs and 342 sons of district chiefs."¹⁷⁷ However, very few of these boys even learned French well enough to take part in the government of their society. 648* 631

Hesling also made an effort to improve the material welfare of the Mossi chiefs. He felt that under the previous administration the chiefs had been "inadequately remunerated," and he considered this bad for their morale. He therefore increased the appropriation for the salaries of chiefs from 86,000 francs in the 1919 budget to 190,000 francs in the 1924 budget, and counted on their receiving an additional 163,260 francs from tax commissions during the year. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, considered the emperor of the Mossi and judged loyal, efficient, and capable by the French, was granted a stipend of 25,000 francs, while the Yatenga Naba, considered his subordinate and judged less capable, was granted only 8,700 francs.^{175*} Only 276 chiefs out of a total of 497 in the territory received any stipend at all that year, because even an augmented budget was too small to provide funds for the lesser chiefs. These chiefs, in the words of one official, "were often inadequate or incapable, but . . . could not be replaced, either because they had no qualified successors or because the traditional system placed an obstacle in the way."¹⁷⁷ Instead of salaries, they received seeds of new plant species such as mangoes, and they were helped in building dams to irrigate their fields and in sinking deep wells near their compounds. In addition to these material rewards, the Governor increased the prestige of the chiefs by giving them medals and honors. 648* 631 465 [643]

Despite these increased salaries and honors, and the more important role they now played in the administration of their subjects, the Mossi

175*
177
648*
631
643

[Pre-World War II Period] FA28 Mossi FA28

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

* 164
 175 chiefs did not regain any of their traditional power. They remained auxiliaries of the administration. Taking Mogho Naba Kom as an example, one report states that this "simple, intelligent, compliant man served as news agent and made himself useful to the political administration" until the arrival of Hesling, when he took a livelier interest in the affairs of the colony.³¹ Another source says of the same monarch:

Free of the ancestral traditions that forbade him to leave his palace, and curious about progress and administration, he travels on all the roads and, under our supervision, busies himself with the settlement of administrative problems, to which he lends the weight of his authority. He makes the proposals for the nomination of province and district chiefs; he encourages his subjects to work and produce. Finally, he fulfills with the greatest dignity the representative functions that devolve upon him at his palace and in the official ceremonies.³²

While it is true that the Mogho Naba made proposals for the nomination of chiefs, he was powerless to prevent their dismissal if they incurred the displeasure of the administration—a frequent occurrence during the Hesling period. For example, when the administration deposed Naba Boulga of Doulougou district for "incompetence" and placed him in "enforced residence" in a neighboring district, the French officials encouraged the election of Bila Kongo primarily because he was a former cercle guard. Bila Kongo was assassinated in 1924, and the Mogho Naba named Mahama Ouedraogo to take his place. This new chief soon had difficulties with the administration, however, and was deposed for exacting unauthorized taxes from his subjects and for abusing his authority. Mogho Naba Kom then appointed Ousmane Ouedraogo, but he was deposed for "incompetence" and exiled to Sao district.

* 175 On the other hand, Hesling made few attempts to change the traditional political and administrative structures of the Mossi. One contemporary source says:

* 631 Since its inception the Government of the Upper Volta has made no changes or innovations, or at best very few, in this connection. The native administrative entities in the cercles of Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Kaya, and Fada-N'Gourma have remained the same as those which Haut-Sénégal et Niger transferred to the colony in 1919. . . . Only in 1922 did the cercle of Koudougou have its "Gurunsi" districts separated from its "Mossi" districts to form a new province, which was placed under the command of the Leo Naba, a chief of the same Gurunsi race. Tenkodogo, a cercle made up of a large number of small districts ruled by thoroughly inept chiefs, has been the object of a partial internal reorganization since the beginning of 1923. The number of its native *circonscriptions* [districts] has been reduced from 82 to 73.³³

[Pre-World War I Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

165 175*

These were minor changes indeed, but they truncated the power of the Mossi chiefs over the Gurunsi and Busansi, which had been on the increase as recently as the 1880's. Except for these slight changes, however, the traditional organization remained as it had been since the immediate post-conquest period. 177 648* 631 ●

Instead of changing the traditional administrative structure, the Governor introduced a new administrative device, the *Conseil de notables indigènes* (Council of Native Notables) in Ouagadougou in April 1920, and subsequently established similar councils at Ouahigouya, Tenkodogo, Kaya, and Koudougou. By establishing these councils, the administration hoped to provide the Mossi with a better understanding of the ideals and standards of French policy; to place the French administrators in closer contact with the people, who "had been almost totally ignorant of the functioning of [the French] administration"; and to form "an elite who will later be able to contribute in a closer and more personal way to the economic and financial life of the colony."¹ The council at Ouagadougou, which was to serve as a model for Mossi country, was to be presided over by the cercle commanders and to have from ten to sixteen members, including the traditional provincial ministers of the Mossi (with life membership); members of the Moslem community in Ouagadougou; and representatives of foreign groups living in the capital, of French citizens, and of the veterans of World War I. No provision was made to include the Mossi chiefs, but hope was expressed that they would support these councils and work with them. 175* 177 648* 646

These councils failed primarily because they turned out to be organs of the French administration and in fact functioned as such, and because their members had varied and often conflicting status. They met two or three times a year at administrative centers and discussed such things as personal taxes, the allocation and execution of prestations, the use of Mossi labor in foreign areas, the licensing and taxation of African traders and merchants, the status of women, the expansion of cultivation, stock breeding, and the collection of shea-butter nuts and kapok pods. None of the Mossi or African representatives had sufficient power or knowledge to challenge the ideas or recommendations of the European members. And the Mossi ministers, while submissive to the Europeans, found it difficult to accept as equals the representatives of non-Mossi peoples who prior to the conquest had lived at Ouagadougou only at the sufferance of the Mogho Naba; nor were they willing to discuss administrative affairs with these people or with the Mossi commoners who represented the war veterans. Ultimately, the councils became rubber stamps for the policies of the

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

were seldom able to follow a case higher than the subdivision level. In cases involving long imprisonment or the death penalty, the relatives of the condemned person usually learned about the sentence through rumors from the capital, but seldom through the administration.

One judicial duty which the administration gave the Mossi chiefs and which they had always disliked was the adjudication of domestic cases. They found such cases even more difficult and distasteful after Hesling issued a circular on "The Condition of the Native Woman," which is summarized in a semi-official report as follows:

[The Governor] is pained to see [the Mossi woman] so often subjected to a special form of slavery which, notably at the time of marriage, reduces her to the role of a domestic animal. Without wishing to interfere with ingrained native traditions, the Governor desires "to prime the desirable evolution by means of judicial decisions." Thus he comes to the decision that in those lawsuits concerning marriage in which formerly the woman was not consulted, she must henceforth be present and must argue the case with her husband. M. Hesling trusts that this procedural reform, which he hopes will give the native woman "a consciousness of her individuality and her rights," will be followed in the courts by further reforms. First of all [the courts] must weaken and then progressively modify those traditions which promote injustice toward women. . . . Questions will no doubt be raised as to whether it is necessary to set up regulations on such matters. However, M. Hesling advises his administrators to adjust [such regulations] to, and apply them with respect for, ancestral traditions. It will be interesting to see the results obtained in this attempt, and to see whether the "moussos" [a malapropism denoting Mossi women] of the Upper Volta will acquire some individuality."

The Mossi chiefs were not told that the Governor's circular recommending a change in the status of women stipulated that traditional practices be taken into account. But even if they had been told, they would not have been impressed, because any fundamental change in the status of women would have placed their whole society in jeopardy. Woman exchange stood at the core of a social, economic, and political nexus that held Mossi society together. True, in pre-conquest times most quarrels and lawsuits were caused by trouble over women, but the marriage system was upheld by all the other institutions. Even after the arrival of the French and the weakening of the chiefs' judicial role, the Mossi could punish violators of the marriage system by imposing social sanctions. They now feared that if the French passed laws giving the women free choice in marriage, and the chiefs had to adjudicate on the basis of these laws, all traditional sanctions would become obsolete. Neither the chiefs nor the Mossi on the Councils of Native Notables nor the elders welcomed any discussion about

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

the status of women. They maintained that the French had conquered the Mossi men, not the women, and that the administration should not interfere with the way in which a Mossi treated his wife. Ironically enough, there was little the administration could do for the Mossi women, since the latter were too timid to approach the Europeans. Most of them continued to react to maltreatment from their husbands by running away, but now they went to the Gold Coast with labor migrants instead of returning to their lineage.

Although the Mossi chiefs had little autonomy in the administration of their subjects, and had to look to the administration for guidance in nearly everything they did, they were not completely powerless. They were the representatives of the colonial administration on the local level, and as such they could control their subjects through the differential allocation of prestations. Those Mossi who had maintained the traditional respect for the chiefs could look forward to less arduous tasks for the administration and to the avoidance of forced labor or army recruitment. Those who by their actions or attitude indicated that they had lost respect for the chiefs were penalized accordingly. Chiefs were also able to retain some control over their subjects because they were still the centers of social, economic, and political relations within their territories. They still received homage and presents from their more loyal or traditionalistic subjects, and with these goods and services they could bind other persons to themselves. Clever chiefs were able to manipulate the colonial administration and use it to enhance their traditional position so successfully that the administration and the missionaries had to take these men into account whenever they wished to establish contact with the population.

The desire of the missionaries to establish missions and schools for the purpose of converting the Mossi to Christianity presented the chiefs with a great challenge because, unlike the administration, the missionaries tried to establish direct contact with the people. The chiefs not only did not like to have Europeans living in their midst, but feared that they would lose control over their subjects who went to live near the missions. However, the chiefs could not refuse to grant the missionaries land on which to build missions and schools. They also provided labor for them, just as they did for the construction of administrative buildings and roads. Similarly, the chiefs recruited children for the mission schools in the same spirit as they recruited students for the schools of the administration. The difference between the Catholic missionaries and the administration with respect to education was that while the former were interested in educating the children of chiefs, they were also interested in children from other backgrounds. Nevertheless, the majority of chiefs continued to send to school

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

only those children whose parents could not prevent them from being sent away. Many of the boys came from serf and commoner families; a few others were the orphan sons or very young sons of chiefs. As a result, few of the chiefs' sons received an education, and thus they were later unable to compete effectively with commoners who had gained a valuable education at the missions.

Acknowledging the average Mossi's refusal to adopt Catholicism as long as his chiefs remained pagan, the missionaries made a valiant attempt to convert the chiefs. Monsignor Socquet reports that when asked why they did not become Catholics mossi replied: "We are looking to our chief," that is to say, "We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is in favor of it, we will not go against his will." Socquet concludes: "It is thus easy to understand how important is the conversion of the chiefs, or at least their sympathy for our religion, to the spread of Catholicism."⁴¹ However, the chiefs and their eldest sons were the most difficult to convert because they were responsible for supervising and carrying out the traditional sacrifices to the royal ancestors, without whose help the Mossi people believed that they could not survive.

The attempts of the missionaries to recruit as many girls as possible for education and conversion alienated the chiefs, because it got them involved in the delicate problem of the status of women and struck at one of the few remaining bulwarks of their traditional power. The problem was that many of the girls whom the missionaries wanted as students were or had been betrothed, or were actually living in their husbands' compounds, when they were taken to the mission. Here the girls were educated and, in the words of Sister Marie-André, "wished to abandon those practices" that were "repugnant to them"—i.e., they rejected polygynous marriages and desired to choose their own spouses.⁴² Those men who lost fiancées or wives as a result of missionary activities sought redress from their chiefs. But the chiefs were powerless against the missionaries, and after the promulgation of Heiling's circular nothing could be done. Many Mossi chiefs were also parties to the defeated marriage alliances because of their involvement in the pughaiure system. Because their prestige and power were at stake, and because they were unable to combat the Europeans openly, these chiefs often used devious means to spirit away the girls from the missions and to return them to their fiancés or husbands. Such activities angered the missionaries, who through the administrators either punished the guilty chiefs or sought new legislation in this area.

The chiefs, the missions, and the French administration were perpetually embroiled because both the chiefs and the missions wanted Mossi women for their own purposes. The administration was caught in the

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

175 170
 177 middle. The Mossi accused the missionaries of being especially anxious
 * 648 to get girls who could become the wives of their converts, and accused them
 • 631 of "stealing" the women. Paradoxically, this charge is supported by a
 797 missionary of the White Fathers:

A Mossi who is unable to acquire a wife by traditional means must either remain unmarried or seduce another man's wife . . . they must choose between celibacy and immorality.

Such a state of affairs creates many problems for the missions, especially since the system is recognized and sanctioned by the colonial authorities. . . . Young native Christians are obviously placed in a very awkward position. Their conversion angers their parents, who refuse to give them a wife; neither will their friends bestow a daughter upon them, because they know that they will not receive one in return, since a Christian may not give a daughter in marriage to a pagan. . . . *Consequently, unless the missionaries help them to find a wife, they must remain unmarried—a very discouraging prospect.* [Italics mine.]¹¹

The Mossi chiefs objected strongly to these activities of the missionaries on behalf of their converts, for they insisted that marriages could not legally take place outside the traditional pattern of reciprocity in woman exchange. They argued that the priests had no daughters, but that once they had obtained wives for their male converts, the daughters of these converts would in fact be pughsiudse to the priests and would be used by them to obtain further converts. There was some truth in this argument. Some young men, anxious to obtain wives without trouble and hard work, approached the mission girls, only to be told that the missionaries alone could sanction their marriage. The priests asked only that the potential husbands become Catholics. Some young men agreed and became Catholics; others reneged on their promise after they had been baptized and married. When a young man left the Church himself and also forbade his wife to go to church, the missionaries sought help from the district chief. If he did not satisfy them, they asked the district commander to intervene on their behalf. The young man then had to return to the Church with his wife or leave the district. Many men chose the latter course, taking their wives to visit some distant relatives or to the Gold Coast, until the women, burdened by motherhood and reintegrated into the traditional social system, lost all desire to renew their association with the missionaries. Under these circumstances, the missionaries could not summon the couple to the administrative center, because they had not violated any of the tenets of the Governor's circular. Furthermore, most administrators, like the Mossi chiefs, had little interest in such cases.

The Mossi chiefs considered the Catholic missionaries a greater threat

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

to Mossi society and to their own authority than the French administration itself. This was primarily due to the fact that these missionaries, as Frenchmen, were very deeply involved not only in preaching Christianity, but also in changing Mossi society by introducing modern medical practices and education. Moreover, as was later brought out, they did not hesitate to use coercion to gain their ends. In seeking to understand why the number of patients in a maternity clinic had declined from an all-time high in the late 1920's and early 1930's to almost zero in the late 1940's, André Dupont, a Catholic missionary, was told by Mossi women, "We are no longer forced to go." He comments: "Was it the fear of sanction that accounted for the unanimous use of the clinic? Alas! It would seem to be so. The use of force and sanction have made a charitable institution odious. It would have been better if the mothers had only been encouraged to use the clinics. 'These natives do not understand,' I am sometimes told. But how are they expected to understand?"¹⁷¹

The American Protestant missionaries did little to challenge the authority of either the Mossi chiefs or the French administration. They were interested only in religious education, and concentrated on teaching the Scripture. The British social critic Geoffrey Gorer, who visited the Mossi during the Hesling period, reports: "There were some American missionaries in this village, a whole family living in a house filled with texts; I do not know what creed they preached or with what success. . . . They spoke with a dispassionate 'none of our business' disapproval of the ill treatment of the negroes, who they said were ruled entirely by fear."¹⁷²

The Moslems, on the other hand, took advantage of the declining power of the Mossi chiefs to spread their doctrines. They pointed out, with little fear of contradiction, that formerly the chiefs had checked the spread of Islam in order to protect their own religion, which supported their political power, but that this power had now been broken by the French. They continued to preach that as soon as all the black people became Moslems the whites would leave, and pointed out that whereas the missionaries had succeeded in getting the administration to attack the marriage customs of the pagan Mossi, they had not interfered with the marriage customs of the Moslem Mossi.¹⁷³ Moreover, the Moslems tried to impress upon the chiefs that conversion to Islam brought with it the benefit of being judged according to Koranic principles rather than native law or French statutes. This propaganda was relatively successful, and by the end of the Hesling period the number of Koranic schools and converts among the Mossi had increased eightfold. True to form, however, the Mossi chiefs seldom adopted Islam or permitted their elder sons to do so. But they did allow

171

175*

177

648*

631

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

797

[Pre-World War II Period]

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

* 175
* 177 their younger sons to become Moslems, and soon abandoned their active
* 648 resistance to Islam.

• 63
[795] Hesling did not permit the Mossi chiefs to revive their traditional religious
[797] political rituals and ceremonies such as the Tense, but he continued to tolerate the Basgha. The French banned the Mossi market chiefs, because they believed (with some justification) that these officials used their offices to procure revenue for the chiefs. The difficulty was that the market chiefs were also responsible for arranging sacrifices to the market deities, which in the absence of such sacrifices would not protect the people from quarrels and violence in the market place. Some chiefs covertly retained their market chiefs; others obeyed the administration and remained anxious over the behavior of their subjects in the market. In general, however, most Mossi chiefs tried to adjust to the religious changes that were taking place, and sought to maintain at least surface amicability with all religious groups. Commenting upon the behavior of the Mogho Naba in this regard,
(643) Dim Delobson states:

[292] The Mogho Naba, above all, is a believer in animism like all his subjects, and it is hard to understand how he manages to reconcile his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity. However, the Mogho Naba is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions, while at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians are celebrating Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends midnight Mass. Nevertheless, he wears his fez (really the bonnet which is the symbol of his office), just as the bishop wears his miter. He likewise embraces Islam for the three Moslem festivals.⁴⁷

* 175
* 648 Hesling failed in his attempt to develop the Upper Volta as a viable colony, and many of the chiefs whom he had used as his auxiliaries lost
[631] not only a great deal of power but also a great deal of prestige in the eyes
[558] of their subjects because of the role they had played vis-à-vis the administration. By 1929 the economy of the Upper Volta was in poor condition:
[433] cotton production had declined; taxes (raised from 5,800,000 francs in 1921 to 18,274,000 francs in 1927 and scheduled to be raised to 26,400,000
[651] francs in 1930) were unbearable; many of the roads that were too extensive, too little used, and too difficult to maintain had been abandoned; and
[491] more than 46,000 laborers who had worked in the cotton fields and on the
[167] roads had fled to the neighboring Gold Coast.⁴⁸ The Colonial Minister, Sarraut, ordered that the colony of the Upper Volta be dismembered. He states in his decree of September 1932 that the suppression of the Upper Volta "would permit appreciable savings, and would make the adminis-

[P.179]

[post world war II period]

XI

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

The Mossi chiefs were neither present nor represented at the Brazzaville Conference, and thus had no voice in the discussions about the postwar political structure of the territories and their place in this structure. The delegates laid the groundwork for the governmental structure, but failed to define the role of the chiefs.¹ Thus, when the first postwar elections were held in August 1945 to select municipal officers (the first elections held in French West Africa outside of Senegal), none of the African chiefs had a role aside from their unofficial influence on their subjects.² The Mossi who were in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and who were qualified to vote took part in the election, but the Mossi in Mogho could not vote because their towns had not yet been granted municipal status.

The first election in which the Mossi and their chiefs voted was the one held in October 1945 to elect delegates from the Ivory Coast (Ouagadougou was then considered the Upper Ivory Coast) to the Constituent Assembly in Paris, which was to establish the Fourth French Republic. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a Baulé chief, planter, and founder of the African Agricultural Union (Syndicat Agricole Africain), had won the municipal elections in Abidjan, and now sought the support of the Abidjan Mossi for his candidacy to the Assembly. The Mossi spokesman in Abidjan, Zebango Pobi, stated that the Mossi would vote only for a Voltaic, and that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou (who because of his father's reputation and his own educational qualifications was now acknowledged as the spokesman for all Mossi chiefs) would decide whom the Mossi would support.³ Houphouët-Boigny then sought the support of the Mogho Naba, but the ruler was committed to a policy of detaching Mossi country from the Ivory Coast and named one of his own traditional ministers, the Baloum Naba. Houphouët-Boigny and his supporters were reportedly "greatly surprised by the Mogho Naba's choice. They felt that the honest but illiterate Baloum Naba was unqualified for the task, and, moreover, could not hope to gain the sup-

[post-world war I period]

180

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 175 port of the coastal Ivory Coast population. There was little they could do
 * 648 about it, however, because 'the decision of the Mogho Naba was irrevocable.'¹⁷⁴
 666

[643] The election was hotly contested. The candidates based their campaigns on local issues: taxes, forced labor, the lack of public services, the status of the traditional chiefs, colonialism, racial discrimination, and so on. The Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), led by Houphouët-Boigny, stressed the need for combating racial discrimination and exploitation by European planters. The Union pour la Défense des Intérêts de la Haute-Volta (UDIHV), formed by the Mogho Naba and a group of mission-educated young men and led by the Baloum Naba, stressed the need to end forced labor, especially among the Mossi, and to place all the Mossi under one territorial government. The UDIHV realized that it had little chance of gaining votes in the south, and therefore concentrated its efforts in the north. However, no credence is to be given to the story that "Whenever [the Baloum Naba] was free from [official] supervision, he told the people, 'Vote for my friend Houphouët. . . . What would I do in Paris, with my forty wives and at my age? I can't speak a blasted word of French.'"¹⁷⁵ Houphouët-Boigny won the election by the surprisingly narrow margin of 12,650 to 11,620.¹⁷⁶

* 175 Houphouët-Boigny played a leading role in persuading the first Con-
 * 648 stituent Assembly to submit to the voters a number of important liberal
 668 colonial reforms. These included the abolition of the Indigénat; the freedom of meeting and association; the bestowal of French citizenship on colonial peoples without affecting their traditional personal status; the use of [646] the French Penal Code in all courts dealing with criminal cases; and the [177] abolition of forced labor.¹⁷⁷

* 175 There was some discussion in the Assembly of what role the traditional
 631 chiefs should play in the projected political structure of Overseas France.
 646 One group of delegates held that "the structure of the local Assemblies
 177 should be tied intimately to the existing structure of the overseas societies. Otherwise, they would be bogus Assemblies whose decisions would serve the interests of only one class in the society, the dominant class."¹⁷⁸ These men felt that while many chiefs were conservatives and might incline to "neo-feudalism," the new elite of young educated Africans who aspired to replace the Europeans were, for the most part, European-trained and out of contact with the rural masses. These delegates believed that only the chiefs could provide adequate popular leadership, and that the French Union could not cohere or develop unless the chiefs had some status vis-à-vis the elite and prestige in the eyes of the people.¹⁷⁹

[post world war I period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

181

Another group held that the chiefs need not be formally associated with the governmental apparatus. A historical precedent was cited: in the early days of colonialism, the chiefs had not become civil servants, and their status had not been impaired. Thus, when a chief collected taxes for the administration, his action was comparable to his former collection of tribute; when he recruited forced labor for the administration and the large plantations, it was similar to the traditional *corvée*; and when he asked people to plant certain crops, it was like asking them to cultivate his own fields. In a word, as the institution of chieftainship had adjusted to past changes in African societies, so it had the capacity to adjust in the future.¹¹

Other delegates, and apparently the French administrators as well, felt that the chiefs should be associated with the administration, but as administrative assistants and not as elected representatives of the masses.¹¹ Since the position of the chiefs was sacred as well as secular, it was argued, political defeat might impair their position as "the fathers of their people."¹²

The constitution drafted by the first Constituent Assembly (lacking any provisions concerning the traditional chiefs) was finally submitted to the voters in May 1946. Although it won a majority of overseas votes, it was defeated by the French people. The subsequently convened second Constituent Assembly was subjected to a great deal of pressure by a group of colonialists called *Etats Généraux de Colonisation*, and as a result many of the provisions of the first constitution, among them the single-college provision and various rights of citizenship, were not included in the second. The revised constitution was accepted by the French voters in October 1946.¹³ By this time, however, many of the African delegates had become so disillusioned with the French parliamentarians in the National Assembly that they decided to fend for themselves. They met in Bamako in the French Sudan and formed an inter-territorial grouping called the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), led by Houphouët-Boigny. Houphouët-Boigny was strongly anti-imperialist, and the party received the active support of the French Communists. It adopted a violently anti-colonial platform, pledging to rally the peoples of Africa to a world-wide struggle against colonial imperialism, and to try to bring all of the emerging political parties in French Africa under its banner in order to achieve the "emancipation of the African masses."¹⁴

The Mogho Naba and the other Mossi chiefs, noting the anti-colonial posture of the RDA and the hostile reaction of the colonial regime to this group, attempted to take advantage of the situation by advocating the re-integration of the Upper Volta under their more conservative auspices. The Mogho Naba had already taken advantage of the Bastille Day celebration

175*
631 ●
648*

[182]

175*
648*
642
666*
175
648*
668175*
648*
642
643
631

[post-world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

- † 175 182
 + 648 in 1946 to visit and consult with the Yatenga Naba about Mossi reunification, thus ending a centuries-old tradition whereby the two rulers could not meet for fear of death inflicted by the ancestors. Their project was now received with greater interest by the local Europeans, both *colons* and administrators, who were alarmed by Houphouët-Boigny's radicalism and bent on preventing the spread of virulent anti-colonialism among the well-disciplined Voltaic populations.

* 175 Shortly after the constitution was approved, the administration announced that elections would be held on December 15 for the Second College of the Ivory Coast's General Council or Territorial Assembly (to be composed of Africans and persons without full French citizenship) and for the other organs of the French Union. Once again Houphouët-Boigny and the RDA, having gained the support of the PDCI and the Parti Progressiste de la Côte d'Ivoire (PPCI), tried to obtain the backing of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the Mossi-supported UDIHV (shortly to become the Union Voltaïque).¹⁹ Again the Mogho Naba refused. Gabriel D'Arboussier, one of Houphouët-Boigny's lieutenants and an important official of the RDA, later charged that the ruler had been influenced by the Minister of Overseas France, Coste-Floret, who told him that the RDA "was no more democratic than it was African, that it was not an Assembly, and that Africans should rally to an institution that was truly African."²⁰ In any event, the Mogho Naba and the UDIHV decided to oppose the RDA. They emphasized the common interests of the Upper Volta and championed Voltaic candidates, Mossi and non-Mossi alike.

* 175 The electoral law of the territories promulgated in October 1946 did not specifically discriminate against the chiefs, but it was heavily weighted in favor of the educated and urban elite. The electorate was confined to civil servants; soldiers and veterans of the armed forces; chiefs; permanent employees of commercial, industrial, craft, or agricultural establishments; members and former members, for at least two years, of cooperatives, trade unions, and committees of provident societies; holders of official decorations; members of prewar courts and councils including the Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture, and Industry, and agricultural unions; Christian priests and ministers; owners of registered real property; holders of driving or shooting licenses; and persons literate in French or Arabic. Candidates for election to the Territorial Assemblies had to be at least twenty-three years of age, to be registered on the electoral list as residents of the territory, to have a good knowledge of French, and to post a bond of 5,000 CFA (Colonies Françaises d'Afrique) francs, which was forfeited if the candidate received less than 5 per cent of the votes in his election district. Many chiefs were eligible to vote, but, because their fathers had opposed their be-

[post-world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

183 175*

ing educated at mission-sponsored schools, few were qualified to run for office.¹⁷ 666
631 ●

More serious for the position of the Mossi chiefs, perhaps, was the fact that many of them either were ill informed about the election or refused to take it seriously. Balima states that a surprisingly large number of Mossi chiefs "could not understand very well the importance of this novelty—which is understandable; had no interest in the formalities, which they nevertheless carried out; and somewhat haphazardly designated as candidates African civil servants to whom they were not even tied by close bonds of friendship."¹⁸ Of course, another reason for this choice of "African civil servants" was that they were among the only persons with the training and education required for candidacy. Nevertheless, the candidates included a few educated members of chiefly families—persons who, not being in the main line of descent or being otherwise ineligible for office in the traditional system, had been "given" to the Europeans to be educated.

The partisans of the Mossi chiefs were victorious in the northern part of the Ivory Coast in an election that saw the emergence of such Voltaic politicians of later fame as Blaise Benon, François Bouda, Zinda Kaboré, Christophe Kalenzaga, Tindougou Ouédraogo, Zehango Pahi, and Maurice Yaméogo. However, the Second College was dominated by Houphouët-Boigny and his RDA colleagues. Despite the Mogho Naba's opposition, RDA delegates set out to ameliorate conditions in the Volta region. For example, the RDA secured the passage of bills to raise the Mogho Naba's salary from 60,000 francs a year, a trifling sum in view of his official and private expenses, to about 500,000 francs a year. Similarly, it ensured that Mossi and other Voltaic students would receive a fair share of the scholarships which France had assigned to colonial students.¹⁹ 175*
643
668
[465]

These gestures did not dampen the ardor of the Mossi chiefs for the reintegration of the Upper Volta. In April 1947, when French President Auriol, touring the territories to observe the operation of the new political institutions, visited the Upper Volta, the Yatenga Naba, the Tenkodogo Naba, and the head ruler of Fada-N'Gourma met the presidential party at Ouagadougou and pressed their claim for separate territorial status. The French reportedly welcomed this petition because it gave them an opportunity to clip the wings of Houphouët-Boigny, as well as to ensure the aid of the chiefs in procuring adequate manpower for a projected extension of the Abidjan-Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. The problem was to convince the National Assembly in Paris that the reunification of the Upper Volta was in the best interests of all concerned. 175*
648*
642
[631]

The French government set up a Parliamentary Commission and sent its chairman, Jean Jacques Douglas, to Ouagadougou and other Voltaic re-

[post-world war I period]

* 184

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 175
648
642
gions to ascertain whether the people desired reunification. Douglas reported his findings to the National Assembly:

You know as well as I do that the Mossi are proud of their past. Thanks to a political and social organization without peer in West Africa, they have known peace since the Middle Ages, in an Africa ravaged by war and depopulated by the slave trade. . . . This ancient land also desires prosperity and modernization. To achieve this its voice must be heard, not only in the National Assembly but particularly in the Grand Council [the highest consultative body] of French West Africa. The Upper Volta must have its own General Council.²²

* 175
* 648
[464] The law authorizing the reconstitution of the Upper Volta as a separate territory was promulgated on September 4, 1947. The non-Mossi populations of the projected territory feared Mossi domination and voiced their opposition in the Assembly, but in the end an accord was reached. The Mossi chiefs next petitioned the French government to pay for the rebuilding and refurbishing of Ouagadougou. François Bouda, one of the few traditional Mossi nakomce to become an elected representative of the Mossi, reminded the members of the Council of the French Union of what had occurred in 1919. He stated that his own father had recruited thousands of men to make bricks for "Bancoville" (an epithet for Ouagadougou; most of its buildings were of sun-dried bricks called *banco*) because Governor Hesling "never considered the possibility of purchasing cement, which was not even expensive. Forced labor was easy to recruit, and no one thought that the day would come when it would be gone."²³ Bouda said that the Government should now help the new territory to modernize the capital.

D'Arbousier, an RDA delegate in the Assembly, declared that he would support the bill if only because in the past the French government had attempted "to make a crack race horse out of an ordinary horse, and in so doing had made it a decrepit mare."²⁴ Funds for rebuilding Ouagadougou were finally voted, and the "Bancoville" of French West Africa began to take on a new look with wide avenues, large administrative buildings, official residences, and even a new palace for the Mogho Naba.

* 175
643
631
554
* 648 With the reconstitution of the Upper Volta, the Mogho Naba and his chiefs attained their highest prestige since the conquest. The chiefs even had strong influence over the Mossi representatives to the organs of the French Union, because of the decisive support they had granted them in the elections. But this increase in prestige was to be short-lived. The chiefs were no longer the sole representatives of their people, and the Mossi were no longer isolated from events in other parts of the Upper Volta, or for that

[post-world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

185 175*

matter from events in French West Africa and the rest of Overseas France. All projects undertaken in the Upper Volta became of interest to the other units of the French Union because the funds to support them had to be voted on by representatives of the whole, including not only local Mossi and non-Mossi, but also Africans in other territories, French colonial populations outside Africa, and the metropolitan French.

The conditions that were to have the greatest effect on the position of Mossi chiefs were created in January 1949, when elections were held to choose the Upper Volta's first General Council. The major parties involved in the election were the Mossi-dominated Union Voltaïque; the Entente Voltaïque, a local section of the RDA representing the interests of such non-Mossi populations as the Lobi, Fulani, Bobo, Senufo, and Gurunsi; and a group of smaller ethnic parties such as the Union Lobie and the Indépendants. The campaign reflected all the tensions and conflicts prevalent among the administration, the RDA, the non-Mossi parties, and the Union Voltaïque. Both the Union Lobie and the Indépendants spoke out against what they feared to be Mossi domination, and accused the Mossi chiefs of "neo-feudalism." The Union Voltaïque accused the RDA of radicalism, of associating with communists, and of hostility to the chiefs. It cited as evidence the deposal of several Agni and Senufo chiefs in the Ivory Coast by partisans of the RDA. The RDA, in turn, charged the Union Voltaïque with supporting reactionary, feudal-minded chiefs, and thus with opposing the true interests of the Mossi and other Voltaic peoples. Furthermore, it accused Masson (Governor Mouragues's executive officer) of encouraging the cercle commanders to fight against the RDA, and of jailing about 300 RDA members at Bobo-Dioulasso.²²

As expected, the Union Voltaïque won most of the seats in the more populous Mossi section of the Upper Volta, and thus was able to dominate the political institutions created by the administration. Nevertheless, the election produced deep political scars in the Upper Volta, and lasting enmity between the RDA and the Mossi chiefs.

During the years that followed the reunification of the Upper Volta, the Mossi chiefs as such were not accorded any specific status by the administration. Beginning in 1953, bills designed to regularize the status of the chiefs were submitted by Mossi delegates to the Assembly of the French Union and to various other organs of the French Union, but to no effect. The Mossi chiefs meanwhile sought to define their own position. In 1952, under the leadership of the Mogho Naba, they formed an organization called the Union of the Traditional Chiefs of the Upper Volta. Article IV of the statutes which they filed with the territorial administration reads as follows:

175*
643*
631
[646]
175*
631
642
[643]

[post-world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 186
175

● 631

647

The present Union has as its aims:

1. To establish an alliance and effective solidarity among its members, and to defend their material and moral interests in the face of all difficulties;
2. To collaborate closely with the economic and social aims of the French administration;
3. To provide aid to the dependents, wives or minor children, of all deceased members of the society. This aid will be obtained:
 - a. by drawing from a special reserve fund;
 - b. by contributions from all members; and
 - c. by an additional subscription according to the circumstances. The total sum to be granted to each family will be set at the annual meetings of the general assembly.

This organization decided to meet annually in Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Tenkodogo, and Koudougou. Member chiefs were to be notified of meetings through the existing traditional political hierarchies. Those chiefs who were unable to attend meetings could send a representative.²⁴

*

[648]

Both the politicians and the French administration welcomed the formation of the Union. The politicians saw it as a forum that would support them in elections and to which they could report on their activities on behalf of their constituents. The French officials welcomed the opportunity to meet periodically with the chiefs and to obtain their help and support for official plans and projects.

One of the new administrative policies was to increase the number of administrative units (the cercles, subdivisions, and postes), and to staff them with European civil servants. Mossi country was given one civil servant for every thousand inhabitants. These officials were thus less isolated from the central administration and more directly responsible to their superiors for the areas under their command. Most of them were assisted by young African civil servants, both Mossi and non-Mossi, who kept administrative records, worked in the agricultural extension programs, acted as interpreters and court assessors, and so on. In addition to these administrative assistants, there were usually junior civil servants who were stationed at the homes of the district chiefs. They were called "secretaries," but they actually served as liaison officers between the administrators and the chiefs.

[634]

Thus the administrators notified the district chiefs through these secretaries that certain taxes were being levied, and would be collected on a specific date; that certain laws affecting them had been passed; that an election would be held on a certain date; or that they should summon the potential draftees in their district to be examined at a certain time.

The postwar administrators did much more than communicate with the district chiefs through their secretaries. They still had considerable author-

[post-world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

ity in local matters, even though the Indigénat had been abolished. They adjudicated minor offenses committed in their territories or referred to them on appeal by the districts and villages. They attempted to settle family quarrels and commercial cases, and ordered that restitution be made in cases of theft. However, they had to send any difficult case or major crime up the hierarchy until it reached the officials authorized to deal with it.

The French administrators also continued to act as intermediaries between the large commercial enterprises in Ouagadougou who wished to recruit men for labor or to buy local produce and enterprises in the larger Mossi towns. Thus, if a private firm in Ouagadougou wanted men to work on the roads, it asked the *chef de poste* (administrator) of a region to tell the district chiefs that its representatives would come to recruit men on a certain date. If a large business was planning to canvass a certain area in order to buy shea nuts, it asked the local administrators to notify the chiefs. No one was ever quite certain whether these activities were legal, but no one questioned them. The *chefs de poste* might simply have been giving the people information that they could not have obtained by any other means.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the supreme chiefs of the other Mossi regions, continued to perform both the administrative role assigned to him by the colonial government and his traditional politico-ceremonial role. He was partly responsible, through his active cooperation with the administration, for the rapidity with which the Upper Volta became a functioning entity. For example, in his anxiety to make his capital worthy of being the territory's administrative center, he gave his full support to the extension of the Abidjan-Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. But he always succeeded in giving the impression (to foreigners at least) of detachment and dissociation from the French administration. His behavior was quite different when he functioned as Mogho Naba of the Ouagadougou Mossi. The following is a brief description of a visit he made to one of the districts:

The Mogho Naba arrived unexpectedly at the district chief's headquarters, where no preparations had been made for his visit. It appears that he was on a tour of his domains to consult with the local chiefs about the forthcoming elections, and had simply dropped in to visit the district chief. However, as soon as his presence became known around the district, important village chiefs and the heads of lineages all put on their robes and appeared to pay homage to him. Meanwhile, he was consulting with his host. But as soon as the conversation was over he came out into the compound, where he was saluted by the chief's Bendere, who praised the royal ancestors by reciting

187

175*

631

647

[692]

[648]*

[464]

175*

648*

643

175*

643

634

574

182

[Post-World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 190

175

178

* 648

641

chief became ridiculously smaller when distributed among the producers; gone the tolls along the roads. Henceforth, all such services will be duly and individually compensated.

Even in the most remote and least accessible villages, people speak of liberty. The old women who go to the pools for water sit down for a moment near their jars in order to talk about it. Even bush fires spread less rapidly than this news.²⁷

*

175

666

641

631

Very few Mossi in the rural areas were qualified to vote in the first post-war elections, and those who were qualified voted for the candidates preferred by the chiefs. However, as the franchise was progressively broadened after 1951, and many more Mossi and non-Mossi politicians traveled through the rural areas, the politicians favored by the chiefs found that they had to campaign to maintain their position. Both the chiefs and their politicians resented this. One visitor to the Upper Volta reports: "A highly educated Mossi of the Upper Volta told me, 'Citizenship has unsettled and ruined the people. Everyone has become his own master, and believes himself free to do whatever he wishes.'"²⁸ Opposition to the chiefs and their friends came from the Moslems, who supported their co-religionists for office, and from a growing group of young Mossi who resented the power of the chiefs. In 1955 one such group in Yatenga, composed of mission-educated youths, war veterans, and former workers, broke away from the Union Voltaïque and formed the Mouvement Démocratique Voltaïque (MDV) under the joint leadership of Gérard Ouédraogo and Michel Dorange, a Frenchman, who had been a captain in the colonial army. The partisans of the MDV often came into violent conflict with the supporters of the chiefs, but the organization itself was not banned by the administration, because its members included many veterans, and because Dorange was one of its leaders.

*

175

665

631

[626]

[666]

The appearance of the anti-chief MDV was symptomatic of the problems which the Mossi chiefs were to encounter as the people became free to elect their own representatives. For one thing, the people could now censure their chiefs by voting for their opponents, who appealed to them in terms of release from traditional prestations. But more important, even those Mossi politicians who were still friendly to the chiefs and depended on their support for election were becoming increasingly autonomous. The chiefs were operating in one power structure, the politicians in another and more important one. In Dakar, in Paris, and in the Palace of Versailles (where the Assembly of the French Union met) Mossi politicians dealt not only with local African problems but with problems the chiefs knew nothing about. As the politicians grew skillful at the game of metropolitan

[post-world War II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

As the politicians grew skillful at the game of metropolitan politics, their power increasingly eclipsed that of their chiefly benefactors and of local French administrators. For example:

A local chef de poste summoned the district chiefs to bring their potential draftees for the war in Algeria early in the morning on a specific date to be examined by medical officers. Those chiefs who looked upon any summons with a trepidation born of their past experience with prewar administrators, arrived at the headquarters as early as 5:30 A.M. on the morning in question, bringing their young men with them. Many of these chiefs, whose only means of transportation was their slow-moving ceremonial horse, spent the night en route to be there at dawn. More sophisticated chiefs coming from similar distances left on the same morning and arrived at about 8:00 A.M., the hour when the administrator himself was first seen stirring in his residence. One chief, a war veteran, rode up on his bicycle at about 8:45 A.M. in a most unchiefly manner and became the butt of jokes from the other waiting chiefs. Another district chief, who was an elected representative, did not arrive until about 9:30 A.M., and he was greeted on arrival by the administrator. This man had only about half a mile to travel, and he did so in his car. His colleagues greeted him with a mixture of jokes, feigned awe, and surprise, and some of them addressed him as "Mogho Naba" and "Governor."

Another example of the shift in the balance of power was the relationship that developed between Joseph Conombo and the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. The Mogho Naba had nominated and supported Conombo as a candidate for deputy to the National Assembly. He was elected, and later became Secretary of the Interior in the Mendès-France Government of 1954. He thus had access to power undreamed of by the Mogho Naba. Being a Moaga as well as a good politician, he never flaunted his authority before his traditional chief; nor did the Mogho Naba try to exercise his traditional powers over him. But their behavior toward each other clearly demonstrated that they were both aware of the shift in power, even though they were both too wise and too polite to make an issue of it.

Other political forces also jeopardized the position of the chiefs. For example, as head of the Union Voltaïque, Conombo had an honored position within a Paris-based African parliamentary group called the Indépendants d'Outre-Mer (IOM): He would have held an even more important position within this group if he had had wider support among the non-Mossi in the Upper Volta. But his power was limited by the presence and competition of the MDV, which, while Mossi-supported, was anti-chief; the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution Africaine (MPA), an anti-Mossi and anti-RDA party formed in 1954 by Nazi Boni of the Bobo ethnic group and supported by some officials in the administration; and the Parti Démocratique Voltaïque (PDV), a local branch of a now less radical RDA

[Post World War II Period]

* 192

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 175 created out of the defunct Entente Voltaïque. In an attempt to gain the support of these parties and of the young Mossi intellectuals who, while anti-chief, were not yet willing to join the PDV, Conombo officially scrapped the Union Voltaïque in 1955 and formed the Parti Social d'Education des Masses Africaines (PSEMA).²⁰ The party pledged to promote social reform and the right of Africans to manage their own affairs, and to struggle against family, regional, and racial hatreds. But it did not win the support of the non-Mossi; nor did it attract many young Mossi, who did not believe that it had discarded the mantle of the chiefs. Conombo's readiness to ally himself with anti-chief forces, however, did make it obvious to the chiefs that when politicians were out to gain power, they did not always take the interests of the chiefs into account.

* 175

642 In 1956, when a *loi-cadre* granting almost complete autonomy to the French African territories was approved by the National Assembly, it made no provision for the participation of the traditional chiefs in the projected governmental structure.²¹ In fact, as preparations were being made to implement the new reforms, a number of politicians and educated Africans launched an attack on the chiefs which seems to have been a step toward edging them out of power altogether. The newspaper *Afrique Nouvelle*, published in Dakar but read by the educated elite throughout French West Africa, carried a series of articles that proclaimed: "The district chiefs should be given neither a position nor a salary!" "Let us democratize the chieftainship!" and "Let us decapitate the district!" (i.e., let us do away with the district chief). Over a photo showing the traditional chiefs, *Afrique Nouvelle* ran the caption, "Are they still chiefs of the territories?"²²

[554]

The Mossi chiefs, who had retained more power and prestige than any other chiefs in French West Africa, bore the brunt of these attacks and rose to defend the rights of all the chiefs. Their most able spokesman was Bouda, a Councillor of the French Union and a district chief in his own right. He wrote in *Afrique Nouvelle*:

The Mossi [socio-political] organization, by its simplicity and cohesiveness, aroused the admiration of France, which respected and retained it.

The power of the Mossi chief may be great, but it is not used to oppose the progress which is being made. The Mossi chief is not as much of a conformist as people have a tendency to believe. The social and political revolution which, since 1946, has made Mossi country so different from what it was before the war, is effecting the transition from a society largely encompassed by Nabas possessing real authority, an authority sanctioned by custom, to a more progressive way of life whose essential characteristics are underlined by the growth of towns, the uprooting of a large part of the population, and the triumph of the desire to be on one's own. . . .

[post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

The Mossi chiefs indeed understand today that a tradition, no matter how respected, is not immutable. It is susceptible to change and evolution; it will evolve.

In all truth, and with due deference to those who systematically denigrate everything connected with them, the chiefs have borne positive witness to the characteristic spirit of this country, and it is as unfair as it is stupid to deny the important role they have played in certain cases in the cause of tranquility and peace.

As the natural spokesmen for their people, they have been, in many instances, the first to pay a heavy price for the common cause. Without them, demagoguery would have plunged the country into irreparable decadence.

The demands of the traditional chiefs are justified and deserve to be heeded, because, in the face of the inertia of the Government and the rapid development of events, it is to be feared that the chiefs, although disposed by nature to be patient and to wait quietly, might run rather than walk in the days to come.²³

In December 1956, the Mossi chiefs, supported by the other traditional chiefs in French West Africa, convoked a Congress of Chiefs at Dakar. This Congress approved a constitution for an organization called the Federal Union of the Syndicates of the Traditional Chiefs, and adopted a proposal on the need for a statute governing the status and material well-being of the chiefs. The Congress did underline the apolitical character of the chieftainship, but asked that the chiefs be given some recognition in the new structures being created by the loi-cadre.

On the local level, the Mossi chiefs convoked a Syndicate of the Traditional Chiefs of the Upper Volta at Tenkodogo a month later. Its president, Etienne Congo, brother of Mogho Naba Sagha II of Ouagadougou, declared:

At this time, when vast changes are under way, it would be inconceivable for us, the traditional chiefs, not to take an active part in the new developments, of whose urgent and precarious nature we are fully aware.

Our position is clear: we are not opposed in any way to this evolution.

As for statutory matters, I wish to express our concern over the fact that at the very moment when the loi-cadre is turning an important page in the history of Africa, our group has been left out.²⁴

The Mossi chiefs had indeed been abandoned by the French administration. Although they continued to receive the support of some politicians, it soon became clear that the latter were mainly interested in maneuvering for power under the loi-cadre and in uniting their parties to this end. Co-ombombo, the leader of the PSEMA, was induced by his supporters and by a

193
175*
642
631
579

175*
642
631
665

668
175*
631
642
665
[648]*

[post world war II period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

7 175¹⁹⁴
 ● 631 number of young educated Mossi to merge his party with the PDV-RDA in the hope of gaining a foothold in the Bobo-Dioulasso area and of uniting
 642 the Mossi and non-Mossi of the Upper Volta. The two parties did merge
 665 in September 1956, becoming the Parti Démocratique Unifié (PDU). The
 668 PDU's manifesto roundly condemned the "artificial division of the territory into East and West Volta" and the "classification of the population as Mossi and non-Mossi," and urged all Voltaics to join the new party. In addition, it declared that the Mossi chiefs merited some status in the territory because they had preserved their "political entity throughout African history."³³ The PDU went so far as to make the Mogho Naba its honorary president, and to speculate that he might be made the Governor of an autonomous or independent Upper Volta.

Nevertheless, the merger was to be a greater victory for the opponents of the Mossi chiefs than for their allies in the PSEMA. For one thing, many of the anti-chief Mossi intellectuals now joined the PDU, bringing with them their modernistic views. For another, since former RDA members were running for office in the Upper Volta under the banner of the PDU, the local chiefs had to give up their opposition to these candidates, and the French administration did likewise. This hands-off policy gave all the candidates, even those who were basically hostile to the chiefs, a better chance of being elected.

[666] The PDU won a slight over-all majority and a large Ouagadougou majority in the Upper Volta elections for the Territorial Assembly and the Government Council in March 1957. However, the anti-chief MDV carried the Ouahigouya (Yatenga) area, and an Indépendant candidate, Maurice Yaméogo, defeated a supporter of the Mossi chiefs, Henri Guissou, in the Koudougou area. Of great importance was the election of Ouezzaïn Coulibaly, one of the early non-Mossi Voltaic supporters of Houphouët-Boigny, who had returned to the Upper Volta after the merger of the PSEMA and the PDV-RDA. Coulibaly was elected on the PDU ticket as a representative for Banfora, a district in the western region.³⁴

Unfortunately for the Mossi chiefs, the RDA emerged from the March elections as the strongest party in all the former French West African territories. Because of this, most of the politicians in the Upper Volta sought to establish a modus vivendi with Houphouët-Boigny, the Party's recognized leader. Most of them went to visit him at Yamoussoukro, his home in the Ivory Coast, and out of these meetings there emerged a realignment of the MDV and the PDV-RDA wing of the PDU at the expense of Conombo and the PSEMA group. This created a new majority in the Upper Volta, and Coulibaly, an old ally of Houphouët-Boigny long suspected by the

[Post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

195

*
175

Mossi chiefs of being a modernist, was elected as the first Vice-President of the new government. Not only was the Mogho Naba deprived of the opportunity to become the African head of the Upper Volta, but such stalwart supporters of the chiefs as Conombo and Bouda were left out of the government. Thus, after twelve years of opposition to Houphouët-Boigny, Mogho Naba Sagha and his chiefs were finally defeated. Their defeat was made even more ignominious by the elevation of a non-Mossi commoner to a position of dominance over the Mossi chiefs.³⁷

631 ●
642
665
668
[643]

Having lost out in the Upper Volta, the Mossi chiefs had no spokesman when the new Vice-Presidents of the Government Councils of the French West African territories and the European Presidents of these territories met at Dakar to discuss the problems of the truncated French West Africa Federation. No one mentioned the problem of the position of the traditional chiefs. As far as the politicians were concerned, the issue of the chief on the inter-territorial level was dead. It had relevance only in those territories where the chiefs retained some influence.

*

In an effort to consolidate their hold on the Upper Volta, the PDV-RDA members in the PDU met in September 1957 and sought to convert the PDU into a territorial subsection of the RDA. This move was resisted by the supporters of the chiefs within the PDU, especially by Conombo, who as leader of the PSEMA, an important faction within the PDU, had been completely eclipsed by Coulibaly and the PDV. Conombo resigned from the PDU and announced his intention to rebuild the PSEMA with the support of the Mossi chiefs. On November 12, however, before his plans could be put into action, Mogho Naba Sagha II died in Ouagadougou and political activities in the Upper Volta came to a standstill. A period of national mourning was proclaimed, and politicians from all parties gathered to pay their last respects and to eulogize the monarch.

*
175
642
665

Sagha's death, like that of all Mossi princes, was ascribed to foul means, although it was clear that he had succumbed to uremia. The people reacted to the interregnum by looting, and the shopkeepers in Ouagadougou and surrounding areas were compelled to close their establishments. "The people of Ouagadougou ran to Saba, but the merchants there were quite diligent, and needed no police force to protect them."³⁸ It was reported that those wives of the deceased ruler who were not at the palace at the time of his death took off the brass anklets denoting their royal status and became free women. If this actually happened, it was an unprecedented occurrence.

*
175
642
665
643
[765]

When the Mossi traditional electoral college convened to choose a new Mogho Naba, it reportedly considered the candidacy of both Moussa Con-

[579]

[644]
[178]*
175
643
666

(Post World War II Period)

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

* 196

175

643

666

go, Sagha's eldest son, and Etienne Congo, Sagha's brother. Etienne Congo allegedly had the support of some politicians, but he was rejected in favor of Moussa. The new ruler was accepted by the Government Council as the "supreme chief of the Mossi" and was installed in the traditional manner. He indicated in his acceptance speech that he was "like a rock (*kougri*) that nothing can move," and became known as Mogho Naba Kougri. A few days after his installation, he appeared in full regalia before the members of the Territorial Assembly to deliver what was probably the most

+

175

643

539

difficult inauguration speech ever composed by a Mogho Naba. This speech will be quoted in full, because it may well be a eulogy for the Mossi chief:

Over and above the signs of respect shown to the mortal remains of my father, and later the expressions of keen satisfaction on the people's part for the choice of which I have been the object—over and above all this, I see the great interest that the governmental and administrative authorities attach to the role which my ancestors have always fulfilled, and which I am called upon to fulfill anew. Over and above all of these external manifestations, I see the un-failing love of all the Mossi for the throne I occupy and for the tradition I represent along with my confreres. Because the importance of my position, as well as the honor that befalls me, surpasses the meager reality and the possibilities of one man, it is with conviction, sincerity, and faith that I present myself to all of you to tell you that while I accept with fortitude these responsibilities and these honors for the love of my people, I count upon the cooperation and friendship of all, the faithfulness, devotion, and courage of all the Mossi, to acquit myself worthily and to preside not in a passive but in an active and decisive way over the social and economic evolution of our country.

Although I represent tradition and custom in this country; although I must ensure the survival of venerable customs, concerning which we shall be intransigent; I am aware, nevertheless, that there are customs which adapt themselves with difficulty to the exigencies of the modern times in which we live.

*

175

643

631

539

This is why, in addressing myself to all the customary chiefs, and especially to my closest associates, I shall say that we have no right to remain passive observers of the reconstruction of our country and of the multiple transformations of the society over whose destiny we have always presided. We must move along with the tide, but in order not to be swept along at a headlong pace and risk failure before reaching our goal, we must stand in the vanguard of the race and lead it at a vigorous and satisfying pace, but one which does not stifle the weak, for they too have a right to life, to progress, to well-being, and to our protection.

As recently as ten years ago, it was easy to be a chief, just as it was easy to be a cercle commander. It was enough to give orders for everything to run smoothly. But today, the chief must add to his title a real merit, a knowledge of men, a true devotion, an integrity, and, above all, a commitment to the welfare of the people under his jurisdiction. It is under these conditions alone

[Post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

that the customary chiefs will preserve and extend their influence, and it is our task to extend this influence. For, if the new institutions are meant for the progress and welfare of the Africans, then they must also be meant for that of the chieftainship.

Our intention, then, is not to leave the management of the country to the elected representatives alone, but to remain in close collaboration with them; for, if the elected representatives of yesterday have rights, the representatives of several centuries' standing retain theirs also.

Intent as I mean to be on curbing all the abuses for which the people have customarily blamed the chiefs, I will not cease to remind the Chief of the Territory, the members of the Government Council, and the elected representatives at all levels, that they themselves must remain, before God and man, the ones truly responsible for these abuses. For, while the lot of the civil servant has improved considerably, and that of the elected representative is at the summit of the pyramid, that of the chief has remained quite modest and quite comparable to that of the still miserable peasant—riches for the others, poverty for himself.

Your Excellency the Governor, Honorable Ministers, and Parliamentarians, I am sure that you understand me. I am equally sure that you think of the meager outlook for the territory, but it is necessary that everyone live well during the period of the seven fat cows, and meagerly during that of the seven lean cows. The cooperation of the chieftainship will be granted to you increasingly for the economic and social betterment of our territory. It devolves upon you, as agents of superior authority, to rid the chiefs of the arbitrary vexations to which no civil servant is subjected any longer, and to send them forth, not as mercenaries but as true captains, into the battle which we all have joined against the human misery that weighs so heavily upon our people.

We are all aware of the magnitude of the struggle, and the cooperation of the chiefs, who influence the entire Voltaic population, may be needed to crown it with success.

Moreover, your Excellency the Governor, the chieftainship has always served well—perhaps has served France, or at least its representatives, too well, at the expense of its own interests.

But I will deliberately forget the errors of the past. I shall remember only the true fidelity which my fathers and their associates have always displayed toward France. I shall look only for the gratitude of the Government of the French Republic on their behalf, and for the considerable role they played in transforming our country. I shall think only of that Franco-African friendship which under normal circumstances will lead us to success, happiness, and peace. I know that the times are difficult; I know that men today have numerous reasons for quarrels. I know that vast popular or so-called popular movements sometimes topple all that other men have built with much patience and wisdom. But despite all of these things, it is with words of concord and of peace that I wish to close, hoping that throughout our political battles we shall keep in mind the need for peace, because man is only happy insofar as he enjoys social peace, as well as peace of the heart."

197
175*
643
539
631

[648]*

[Post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

201

the Upper Volta met, discussed "the affair of October 17," and issued a statement dissociating itself from the Mogho Naba's action, reaffirming its desire to collaborate with the established authority, and requesting a clarification of the status of chiefs in the new order. The Government Council of the Upper Volta welcomed this statement, and hastened to reassure the chiefs that their status was not in danger: "It is not a question of damaging the traditional chiefs as a group, but rather of stigmatizing vigorously an act emanating from a superior chief like Mogho Naba Kougri, the consequences of which, unforeseen as they were, could have placed all the Mossi chiefs in a regrettable and irreparable position."⁷⁷

The Mogho Naba had obviously reached a political impasse, and he next turned his attention to creating a new image of the chieftainship. To this end, he married a young Mossi woman in accordance with the civil statutes of the state, thus becoming the first Mogho Naba and the first important Mossi chief to do so. A spokesman at the wedding placed this act in its proper perspective with the following words:

I should now like to underscore the fact that this date, November 22 [1958], will be inscribed officially in the annals of the Upper Volta. For the first time in the history of our country, an Emperor, the person who best symbolizes tradition, has upset ancestral habits in the interest of progress. For the first time a woman will be given consideration in a royal court where she will be able to feel at her ease. For the first time, the spouse of a traditional chief will have her place near her husband as an equal and steady companion.⁷⁸

The politicians were apparently prepared to recognize the eminence of the chiefs as long as they did not attempt to intervene in the affairs of the state, and a number of them attended the Mogho Naba's wedding. Among those present were the Presidents of both the Government Council and the Territorial Assembly, parliamentarians from various parties, and the mayors of Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou. On December 10, 1958, the Territorial Assembly confirmed Yaméogo as President of the Government Council. The Assembly also approved his slate of ministers, among them Bouda, the Mossi chief who had once been a strong supporter of the traditional political hierarchy but who now belonged to the UDV-RDA. Then, on December 11, the Assembly decided to adopt the draft of a proposed constitution for the Upper Volta. Articles 2 and 3 of Paragraph I of this constitution state explicitly:

The Republic of the Upper Volta is one and indivisible, secular, democratic, and social. Its principle is that the government is of the people, by the people, and for the people. . . .

*Sovereignty belongs to the people. No section of the population, and no individual, may usurp it. [Italics mine.]*⁷⁹

[Post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

- * 203
- * 175 The proposed constitution thus negated any claims of the traditional chiefs over any section of the Voltaic population. Henceforth, the only leaders of the Voltaic people were to be their elected representatives. The constitution did not even mention the traditional chiefs, and no provision was made to give them a special voice in the government. By its silence on these matters, the constitution had reduced the Mossi chiefs to the status of ordinary citizens. Certain parts of this constitution were later changed, but not the sections dealing with the democratic nature of the emerging state. The power of the chiefs was gone. Yaméogo, who had been a commoner among the Mossi of Koudougou, was given the title of "President of the Republic" by what had now become the National Assembly. It was he who traveled to and from Paris with Houphouët-Boigny and the other members of the Conseil de l'Entente, an organization comprising Dahomey, the Ivory Coast, Niger, and the Upper Volta, to parley for the independence of the Upper Volta; and it was he who traveled around the country explaining his policies. Yaméogo did not belabor the issue of the chiefs, but he declared quite firmly that "the days of devotion to certain little Voltaic saints" were over. "Now must begin the era of the cult of the Upper Volta, next only to that of God."⁸⁸
- * 175 France finally agreed that the Upper Volta should become independent on August 5, 1960, just 64 years after the conquest. However, sovereignty and power were not to be transferred to those from whom it had been wrested originally. Mogho Naba Koungri was only a spectator at the National Assembly when Yaméogo, praising Houphouët-Boigny and General de Gaulle, announced the coming of independence; and he was only a spectator when the Assembly ratified the independence agreement on July 27, 1960. The President said on that occasion that "Independence is not an end in itself, but a beginning. In effect, from now on we are called upon to assume full responsibility for our destiny."⁸⁹ He added that changes in the country would be brought about "in cooperation with the elected representatives, the party [RDA], and the youth organizations." He made no mention of the chiefs, and in fact the only chiefs who played any role during this period did so as politicians. The chiefs were to be honored only on Independence Day, when the President, in a spirit of benevolence, gave thanks to all those who had played a role in recovering the dignity of "Voltaic Man," including not only the French professors, the clergy, the war veterans, and the politicians, but also the "traditional chiefs who safeguarded the integrity of our state against external attack."⁹⁰
- * 175 The government of the Upper Volta Republic decided to allow the institution of chieftainship to fade away by preventing the election of new

[Post World War II Period]

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

203

chiefs. The Mogho Naba continued to receive a yearly stipend from the government, and local chiefs were still respected by the older people and by the more tradition-minded youths. Nevertheless, the drive toward the elimination of chiefly status in the Upper Volta went on. In January 1962, government decrees prohibited "the wearing of any costume or headgear indicating the status of chief or slave";³³ thus, the remaining Mossi chiefs are to be unrecognizable as such outside their own villages and districts. The chiefs, for their part, seem to have become reconciled to their fate. Many of their young relatives are joining the growing ranks of the new politicians.

175*
182
631 •
[656]

CHAPTER 9

[237]

Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Republic, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tradition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers (*Moro Nabas*) who formerly held feudal-like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, extended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grasslands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irrigation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

9. Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

239

long been famous. The former are sometimes ridden but are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses were and are still important for military and ceremonial purposes and for external trade to other areas.

The Mossi have never excelled in metalworking. The people in the northern part of the country have worked indigenous ores since aboriginal times. Those in the south get iron mainly from traders and caravans. The other metals which the Mossi smiths manufacture into tools and ornaments are also obtained from traders.

TRADE IN HISTORICAL TIMES

The geographic position of Mossi country has much to do with its being an important trade and market center. The country itself has always produced grain, cotton and livestock for export. And for several centuries caravans have passed through this region carrying Sudanese and Saharan products to the forest zones to the south, and carrying forest products back to the arid north. The beginning of this trade is lost in the dim past, but it is safe to say that it developed shortly after or along with the founding of Timbuktu about 1100 A.D. The Mossi themselves were not definitely linked to this important *entrepot* until they raided it in 1328, but we can assume that they had been trading there for some time before that event took place. Similarly, we have no record of when the Mossi began trading with the forest zones, but we can also assume that this trade began around the same period or even before.

Our first evidence of Mossi trade and commerce comes from Europeans who were themselves interested in conducting their own trading activities with the peoples in the Bend of the Niger. Bowditch, an Englishman who had journeyed to Ashanti to sign a treaty facilitating the reopening of a profitable trade with the coast, wangled the first important piece of information about the Mossi from his reluctant hosts:

Five journeys from Yngwa is Mosee, a more warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella. I place it to the N.W. because its merchants pass by Yngwa; they do not cross the Karhalla [White Volta] nor any river which is not fordable. (Bowditch 1819: 180)

This information is not strictly correct since Koupela was not the capital of any of the Mossi kingdoms, but Bowditch's informant had probably heard of Koupela because it was the largest political entity near the large caravan center at Pouitenga.

175 Dupuis, who replaced Bowditch in Kumasi in 1817, obtained sur-
 437 prisingly good data on trade relations between the Ashanti and the
 Mossi, considering the reluctance of the middlemen traders to furnish
 any help in this matter. He discovered that Ashanti traders

[103] ... sometimes travel as far as Aughoa, the Magho, and to the east of
 Kasogho. Aughoa is distant from Coomassie twenty-five journeys by the
 Salgha and Yandy Roads, which would give a distance of three hundred
 that vegetable substance . . . by the name of Shea butter. (Dupuis 1824 :
 App. cvii)¹

The Hausa merchants and caravaneers knew a great deal about the
 Mossi and their resources, but it was only with great difficulty that
 Clapperton persuaded Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto to give
 him the following information:

[101] The country of Mouchier or Mouchi is situated to the west of Ghurma.
 It is vast and possesses a gold mine, rivers, forests and mountains. It is
 inhabited by tribes of the Sudan who possess many fast horses, and large
 donkeys. Their king is called Wagadougou; their asses are sent down to
 the Gondja to carry the drums of the army. (Clapperton 1829 : 323)

It is obvious that either Clapperton or his informant confused the
 capital of the Mossi with their king, and included parts of Ghana in
 [23] their territory. Nevertheless, one does get an indication of the impor-
 tance of livestock in Mossi trading.

The great bulk of the trade between the Mossi and their neighbors
 to the north and to the south was done through the medium of
 175 caravans which crisscrossed their territory. The first person to signal
 437 the existence of these caravans was Barth (1859 : III, 646-648) who,
 487 although he did not enter Mossi country during his extensive travels
 in the Sudan from 1849 to 1855, reported the existence of several
 caravan routes which traversed the Mossi from the desert to the
 [103] forest. The first route he described proceeded from "Kirotashi, a town
 on the east side of the Niger, one day south of Say, to Woghodogho."
 [366] Ten days out of Kirotashi caravans usually reached Tengkodogo, and
 on the thirteenth day they arrived at Koupele which according to

(1) The Aughoa referred to here is really "Wagha," the term often used by the Mossi
 [63] when talking about their capital, Waghadougou. Magho is really "Mogho" the name
 of Mossi country itself, and Kasogho is the name of a province of Wagadougou com-
 manded by a minister of the Moro Naba, the Kasogho Naba. Dupuis' report on the
 actual distance between Kumasi and Waghadougou is almost the same mileage as that
 [366] of today. Koelle (1854 : 6) received a report from a slave liberated in Sierra Leone in
 [487] 1854 that the great Mossi trading center "Kupele is four days from Wardugu, the
 Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sends presents; and one month from
 Salak (Salaga), an Asante town, where they bring their kola-nuts."

9. Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

255

When one asks the Mossi directly, "What is a market?"
 the response to this question is: "A market is a place where people meet to buy and sell. People travel from one market place to another market place, and on the way they stop and see their friends in other villages. In the market one often meets and drinks with one's friends. People also go to distant markets to find things which they do not grow themselves or which cannot be found in their own markets."

Lending support to the Mossi contention that markets are places where one goes to buy and sell is the fact that most important markets in their country are found at the intersections of well-traveled routes. These intersections are often the places where chiefs have their capitals or compounds and this leads to the further idea that there is a connection between chiefs and markets, if only because the power of the chiefs makes markets possible. This does not mean, however, that the market is a purely physical entity which can only exist under the aegis of a chief, or that it is a purely economic institution. First of all, some markets, especially the smaller ones, are moved periodically without too much difficulty. Secondly, and of great importance, is the fact that whenever and wherever there is a large gathering of Mossi there is a "market." Indeed one can say that Mossi seldom come together in large numbers without coming to a market, or without creating one. It appears that the Mossi cannot interact with one another in any circumstance without also exchanging goods of some kind. For example, when a pagan chief holds the annual festival to his ancestors, the people who attend form a market in the vicinity of his compound. In those districts where the chiefs have become Christians and celebrate their birthdays rather than the traditional ancestors' rites, the people go to pay them homage and also "make a market." Similarly, whenever there is a funeral of an important chief, the people from the surrounding villages or even districts bring commodities to his hamlet and hold a market during the ceremony. On Christmas day, 1955, the people of Manga district "moved their market" about 500 yards to the Catholic Mission grounds where the Christians were celebrating their holiday. And after celebrating the prayers of Ramadán, the Moslems and their pagan townsmen repair to the markets to spend the rest of the day.

Most Mossi markets are inaugurated with religious ceremonies except those which develop by accretion—that is, by more and more persons coming voluntarily to trade. When a chief orders that a market be created or when a market is moved from one place to another place for any reason, the chief is the person who gives the order for the ceremony to be performed. First of all he speaks to his Raga Naba (market chief), usually a non-Mossi slave, about the need for the market or the desirability of changing its location. This man then consults a *teng-*